



NUR JAHAN & JAHANGIR

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NUR JAHAN AND JAHANGIR

**NUR JAHAN
AND
JAHANGIR**

**ROBERT CAUNTER
MOUNTSTUART ELPHINSTONE
STANLEY LANE-POOLE**



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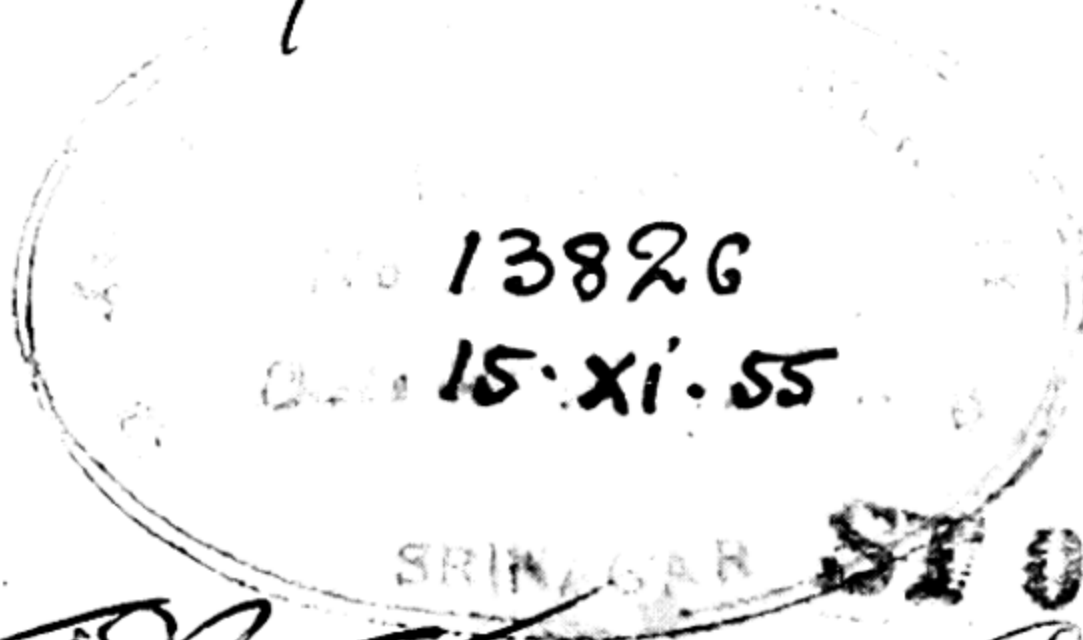
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CHAPTER I

THE morning dawned upon two travellers in the midst of a blighted wilderness. As the sun threw its level rays over the horizon, they flooded a plain where no boundary could be traced but the sky, and from which the dominion of vegetation was almost wholly withdrawn; there being nothing to relieve the dull, uniform sterility of the scene but occasionally the trunks of a few stunted trees, which appeared to stand there only as so many



A PROCESSION
Moghul Painting

legible records of the utter barrenness of the spot. These sad wayfarers rose from beneath the scanty shades of one of those skeletons of the wilderness to pursue a journey with a deplorable prospect before them. They were far advanced upon a wide inhospitable desert, where no welcome *serai* was to be seen, and where the passenger was seldom met. The refreshing well was

nowhere found in these dreary and unfruitful solitudes.

The travellers were a Persian and his wife, who, in consequence of a marriage not approved of by their respective families, had fled from their country to seek that home in another which was denied to them in their own. The man was handsome, of noble carriage, possessing all the generous qualities of his race—bold, active, enterprising, with great capability of endurance, and withal of a mild and placable spirit. The woman was young, beautiful but extremely delicate; and to crown her husband's misery and her own, she was about to become a mother. When they arose on this sad morning, they consumed the last of their provisions. They had only a small quantity of water in a leathern bottle, which the Persian made his fainting wife drink before they proceeded on their way. What a deplorable condition! To linger was certain death, and to advance seemed only a dallying with hope—there appeared no chances of relief. They had several days' journey to perform, without being provided with any sustenance for so long and arduous a travel; and the chances of meeting with passengers were so remote as to render their perishing in the wilderness almost a certainty.

The Persian's wife was mounted upon a small lean horse, which for the last several days had been so sparingly fed that it could scarcely proceed. The wretched woman was unconscious of the extent of her danger. She knew not that the whole of their provisions were exhausted, save one small rice cake which the tender husband had reserved for her use. He kept from her the awful fact of their utter destitution lest in her precarious condition it should bring on premature labour where no assistance could be obtained, and she would thus probably perish. In spite of the misery of his situation, he still entertained the hope that he should obtain relief and trusting in the mercy of Him who guides the wanderer as well in the wilderness as in the populous country, he

pursued his journey though with a heavy and foreboding heart. As the sun rose, the heat became intolerable. There was no shelter from its scorching rays. The anxious husband held an umbrella over the head of his wife as he walked painfully along by the side of her lean ambling pony; but after a while his arm became so cramped that it was with difficulty he could bear the weight of the umbrella. This, though not great, was the more sensibly felt from the elevated position in which he was obliged to keep his arms. He was, however, marvelously sustained by the excitement of his anxiety for the dear object near him, who bore with unrepining endurance privations which in her state were especially deplorable. They travelled through a long and toilsome day. The rice cake was consumed long before they halted for the night.

There being no shelter near, the husband fixed the handle of his umbrella into the ground, and throwing over it a thin palampore formed a kind of rude tent, under which his wife might repose without immediate exposure to the unwholesome night air. She was exhausted with fatigue; her tongue was parched with thirst, and the rapid increase of circulation too plainly told that fever was fast coming on. To attempt to depict the husband's agony was a vain endeavour. Without food—without water—his wife actually in the pains of labour—with no hope of relief—in the midst of a vast wilderness, which even the wild beasts shunned as a solitude where only death and desolation reigned—he had no thought but that both must lie down and die. The sufferings of his hapless companion were appalling, yet she bore them without a murmur. The severity of her pangs aggravated that thirst by which she had been so long and so grievously oppressed. He had but one alternative, and did not hesitate to adopt it in such a trying emergency. His wife's agonies were every moment increasing. He quitted the insecure canopy which he had erected for her

temporary accommodation, seized his dagger, ran to the pony, and, in a paroxysm of tumultuous anxiety to save the life of the object dearest to him upon earth, plunged it desperately into the animal's throat. Having caught the blood in a wooden trencher, he bore it to the tent. During his short absence, his wife had become a mother. The cry of the poor babe raised within him, at this moment, emotions of parental joy; but these were in an instant stifled by the consciousness of those awful perils by which he was surrounded. He put the bowl to the lips of the suffering mother; she took a small quantity, and was in a slight degree refreshed. He now kindled a fire upon the wide blasted desert, and broiled some flesh of the animal which he had just slaughtered. It was tough and rank. The juices, however, of this unpalatable repast subdued in a degree the yearnings of hunger and the dreadful pangs of thirst.

On the morrow, when the sun again cast its vivid light upon the vast level of the wilderness, this wretched pair arose to pursue their journey. The Persian dreaded the increased difficulties which he should have now to overcome. His companion was so weak that she could scarcely stand; yet she was obliged to carry her infant, as he was loaded with their baggage and other necessaries, that had hitherto been confined to the back of the pony. They had scarcely commenced the prosecution of their melancholy journey, when they were cheered with the prospect of relief. Not more than a mile distance before them, a beautiful lake seemed to smile in the morning sun, and to invite the suffering travellers to bathe their limbs in its limpid waters.

The margin was dotted with groups of trees, displaying a luxuriant foliage, which was reflected in the still mirror below, and promised a grateful shade to the travel-worn passenger. Oxen appeared to be grazing on its margin, and every now and then, in the luxury of the most exquisite enjoyment, to hide themselves under the

pellucid surface of its calm waters. Beyond, a gorgeous city reared its battlements amid the solemn silence of the desert, over which it seemed to cast the glow of its splendour, and to speak with a mute but eloquent voice of cheering to the heart of the forlorn wanderer, of which they alone can appreciate the magic force who have braved the perils of the wilderness, and seen death before them face to face amid its vast and inhospitable solitudes.

The Persian and his wife, overjoyed at the sight made the best of their way towards the lake and the city, in which the stir of busy life seemed to prevail; for they saw, as they imagined, multitudes of their fellow beings issue from its gates and spread over the adjoining plain. The scene, to the excited imagination of the travellers, was animated beyond description. The sight of human habitations, and of human beings who could afford them succour; of water in which they might assuage the pangs of the most painful of bodily privations; of houses in which they might find shelter after their perilous journey—all gave such a stimulus to their exertions that even the weak and suffering mother, with the assistance of her husband's arm, was able to go onward with tolerable firmness.

When they had proceeded for some time, the lake and the city still appeared before them, but no nearer. It seemed to them as if they had been moving their limbs without advancing a single step. They still, however, pressed forward under the delusive expectation of reaching the fair goal of their hopes; but after a while the lake began suddenly to disappear, the city was by degrees shrouded in mist, which dispersed in the course of a few minutes, and to their consternation, they saw nothing save the wide arid expanse of the desert before them. The unhappy woman sank upon the earth in a paroxysm of mental agony. The miserable man was now perfectly overwhelmed with despair. He feared that his wife was dying. She could no longer carry the infant; there was, consequently, but one alternative. The

struggle of nature was a severe one, but no choice remained between death and parental inhumanity. The desire of life prevailed; and it was determined, after an agonizing conflict, that the infant must be sacrificed. The mother's tears were dried up on her burning cheeks, and the father's pangs were lost in the anxieties of the husband. The appeals of nature were only stifled by louder appeals in both their bosoms; and, however fierce the repugnance, it was to be resisted and overcome. The death of their babe was the least of two evils; they therefore submitted to the stern severity of their condition.

It was agreed by the half-distracted parents, that the new-born pledge of their affections should be abandoned. The mother having kissed it fervently, consigned it to the arms of her husband, who, having taken it to a spot where the stunted stock of a tree protruded from the scorching sand, placed it under the scanty shade of this bare emblem of sterility, and, having covered it with leaves, left it to the mercy of that God who can protect the babe in the desert as well as the sovereign on his throne. On rejoining his wife, the Persian found her so weak that he feared she would be unable to proceed. Though released from the burden of her infant, her prostration of strength was so extreme, from the united effects of mental and bodily suffering, that she could scarcely rise from the earth. The pangs of thirst were again becoming horrible; still, after a severe struggle, she rose, and the wretched pair pursued their journey in silence and in agony.

They had not proceeded far before the invincible yearnings of nature prevailed over mere physical torment, and the bereaved mother called in a voice of piteous anguish for her child. She could no longer endure the pains of separation. The idea of having voluntarily consented to become the instrument of its death, was a horror which increased with every step, and she sank exhausted upon the sand. The sun, now rising towards its meridian, poured

upon her the fiery effulgence of its beams. The husband's heart was subdued by her sufferings. Dashing a tear from his cheek, he undertook to return and restore their infant to the arms of its distracted mother. Fixing the handle of his umbrella again in the ground and throwing the palampore over it, he placed his wife under that frail covering, and immediately retraced his steps. With a sad heart he reached the spot where he had lately deposited the infant; but what was his consternation at beholding the leaves removed, and a black snake coiled round it, with its hideous mouth in front of that his child! In a frenzy of desperation he rushed forward; but instantly arrested by the instinct of paternal fear, he stood before the objects at once of his tenderest interest and of his terror, as if he had been suddenly converted into stone.

The previous motion, however, had evidently alarmed the monster; for it gradually uncoiled itself from its victim without committing the slightest injury, and retired into the hollow trunk which marked this memorable spot. The father snatched up his child, and bore it in ecstasy to his mother; but she was extended under the palampore in the last struggle of expiring nature. Her feeble spirit had been overborne by her lengthened sufferings of mind and body, and she now lay at the point of death. She raised her eyes languidly, received the babe with a faint smile upon her bosom, and tenderly kissed it. The effort overcame her, and she fainted. After a short time she rallied—but it was only to die. The husband hung over her with mute but intense tenderness, cursing in his heart with a bitterness which that very tenderness aggravated, those relatives who had caused the death of all he valued upon earth, and rendered him the most desolate of men.

"Ghyas" said the dying woman, "dig me a grave in the wilderness; don't leave this poor body to the beasts of prey. We shall be restored to each other. There is

a paradise beyond this world where all the good meet and are blessed: we shall be among them. I die happy in the possession of your love, and in the consciousness of never having forfeited my claim to it."

The Persian could not speak. He pressed the wife of his bosom to that heart which she had so fondly engrossed, and scalding tears of agony overflowed his cheeks. He threw his arms tenderly round her, his heart throbbing audibly, and buried his bursting temples in the hot sand beside her. She spoke not—she stirred not; he raised his head to kiss her fading lips—her eye was rayless—those lips were slightly parted, but fixed; a faint smile was on her cheek, yet no breath came. She was dead!

CHAPTER II

GHYAS Beg¹ raised himself from the earth, cast his eye with a look of reproach towards heaven, and gave way to a burst of sorrow; then bringing the strong energies of his mind to resistance, the ebullition shortly subsided, and he bowed to the stroke with the

1. *Ghyas Beg was son of a high state official, Muhammad Sharif. His father spent his whole life, discharging official duties conscientiously and without fear or favour. Naturally his scrupulous integrity created a number of enemies, who, however, failed to harm him during his life-time. The son, Ghyas obtained a good position after his father's death, through his own merit. But, owing to hostility of the old enemies of his father he fell into royal disfavour. Apprehending more serious trouble, he decided to leave Persia. At this period, the fame and might of the Moghul dynasty in India spread far and wide; and many distinguished foreigners attracted*

fortitude of a man who looks upon endurance as his province, and upon calamity as his lot. During the whole of this melancholy day he did not quit the body. His wife's dying request was in his ears and in his memory—"Dig me a grave in the wilderness," and he resolved to comply with it. He passed twelve lingering hours in a broiling sun, occasionally casting himself under the palampore beside the corpse, close to which his infant slept unconscious of its loss. His thirst became at length so excessive that his throat and tongue swelled, and he began to apprehend suffocation. His face was blistered and sore, his eyes inflamed, from the combined effects of weeping and the glare of an ardent sun upon the white sand of the desert. Towards evening he was so overcome by his sufferings that he laid him down to die. The infant cried for nutriment, but he had none to give it. Taking the linen from his body, which was saturated with perspiration, he put it to the babe's mouth: this kept it alive.

His tongue had by this time enlarged to such an immense size that he could not move it. The inflammation was so great that he was unable to close his lips. Expecting death every moment, he pressed still closer to his bosom the innocent pledge of conjugal affection, when he was unexpectedly relieved by the cracking of his swollen tongue.

by the powerful patronage of Akbar the Great, visited India. The Emperor appreciated their qualities by conferring honour and favours; and the historic court at Agra became a glorious seat of learning and culture. Ghyas could travel from Teheran to Kandahar in safety. However on the road to India, he was waylaid and robbed, And he barely managed to save his life and his wife's. He was stripped of every possession except an aged horse. Placing his wife on the animal, he trudged along the road. In such tragic circumstances, his wife developed pains of childbirth. The helpless situation in which he had been now placed by ill luck in a desolate desert with his beloved wife suffering the pangs of labour, gave him the greatest shock of his life.

A copious discharge of blood followed, which passed into his stomach, and somewhat assuaged the fever that burned within him. He was so much relieved by this effort of nature, that he almost immediately sank into a short but refreshing slumber.

The sun had gone down in brightness; and when he awoke, the stars were looking upon him from their throne of light, and the whole heavens smiling above him in their beauty. The intense calm azure of the sky seemed an emblem of the repose that dwells there. A gentle breeze had broken the oppressive stagnation of the air, and fanned his hot, blistered features as with an angel's wing. His energies revived. Though the thirst by which he was still parched affected him greatly, still it was in some degree mitigated by that balmy breath of heaven, which he felt now for the first time since he had entered upon the desert. He commenced his melancholy task of digging a grave to enclose the remains of an object who had been dearer to him than his own life. He took his crease—a short dagger with a wide double-edged blade—and began to remove the sand. It was an arduous and sorrowful labour. After an earnest application of mind and body for two hours, he succeeded in sinking a hole four feet deep. Into this he tenderly lowered the body of his departed wife, filled up the pit, and throwing himself upon it, lay there until morning. There was a discharge of blood from his tongue once or twice during the night, which more than probably saved his life.

Towards dawn he fell into a deep and death-like sleep. He was at length awaked by feeling himself severely shaken. Upon looking up he perceived himself to be surrounded by strangers. They were travellers on their way to Lahore. They gave him food and water: the infant was fed with goat's milk by means of a sponge. His strength being now somewhat restored he joined the travellers, and advanced with them by easy stages to their destination. /

Lahore¹ was the field in which the Persian's talents soon displayed themselves. Ghyas was no ordinary man. He attracted the notice of the Emperor Akbar, who had a singular faculty in discriminating merit, and from that moment rose to distinction. Akbar perceived his value, and made it available to promote the interests of his empire. The Persian advanced by a regular but rapid progression until he became high treasurer of the state. He was a chief political organ of one of the wisest sovereigns which history celebrates, and held in great respect by the whole nation. The Emperor reposed implicit confidence in him: it was well deserved, and ended only with his life.

The daughter of Ghyas Beg who had been so providentially preserved in the desert, as she grew up, excelled in personal attractions all the loveliest women of the East, and was therefore honoured with the designation of Mihr-ul-Nissa: the Sun of Women. The extraordinary event which had distinguished her birth seemed but as the prognostic of future distinction. The child of the desert grew to be the perfection of woman. The greatest care was taken to make her mistress of every accomplishment which could impart additional fascination to the natural graces of her sex. In vivacity, wit, spirit, and all those elegant attainments in which women especially excel, she was unrivalled by few and surpassed by none.

1. *The Emperor Akbar, at the arrival of Aiass, kept his court in that city. Asaf Khan, one of that monarch's principal officers attended then the royal presence. He was a distant relative to Aiass, and received him in a friendly way, making him his secretary. Aiass soon recommended himself to Asaf in that office, and by some accident his diligence and ability attracted the notice of the Emperor, who raised him to the command of a thousand horse. He became in process of time master of the household; and his genius being even greater than his good fortune, he raised himself to the position of Iatimad-ud-Dowlah, or High Treasurer of the Empire. Thus he who had almost perished through want in the desert, became, in the space of a few years, the first subject in India.*

—J. Stewart.

Of her it might have been almost said, without any assumption of the licence of poetry—"The force of Nature could no further go." In masculine vigour of understanding she stood alone and unapproached. Her beauty was the theme of universal praise. Suitors from all quarters sought her hand; but it was not easily won. Ali Kuli, surnamed Sher Afgan, (Afkun)¹ or Tiger-Thrower, a Turkoman noble of distinction, at length presented himself; and to him she was betrothed. The Moghul historians speak of Sher-Afgan as the most eminent person of his age, and much esteemed by the Emperor, who never failed to bestow his favour upon brave men. The Turkoman was of lofty stature, and no less remarkable for the beauty of his form and features than for the rare qualities of his mind. He was universally acknowledged to be every way worthy of the beautiful Mir-ul-Nissa by whose preference he felt equally flattered and delighted.

1. Ali Kuli Beg Istajlu, who was educated under the instructions of Shah Ismail the Second, came and entered the service of the Emperor Akbar during the period of his stay at Lahore. He there married Mirza Ghiyas Beg's daughter, who was born in the city of Kandahar."

(Elliot and Dowson's *HISTORY OF INDIA* vol. vi. p. 398),

CHAPTER III

SOON after she had been betrothed to Sher Afgan, the lovely Persian was seen by Prince Salim, afterwards well known as the Emperor Jahangir, who became so desperately enamoured of her,¹ that imagining there could be no obstacle to her union with a prince of the blood, he applied to his father Akbar, for his consent; to espouse the beautiful daughter of the high treasurer, Mirza Ghyas Beg.

The Emperor sternly refused his consent; at the same time upbraiding his son with seeking to degrade himself by a mean alliance.² Prince Salim was abashed; and, to

1. *Salim, the Prince royal, one day visited her father. When the public entertainment was over and wine was brought on the table, the ladies, according to custom, were introduced in their veils. The ambition of Mihr-ul-Nissa aspired to a conquest of the prince. She sang—he was in raptures; she danced—he could hardly keep his place. When his eyes seemed to devour her, she, as if by accident, dropped her veil, and shone upon him at once with all her charms. He was silent for the remaining part of the evening. She endeavoured to confirm by her wit the conquest which the charms of her person had made.*

Salim, distracted with his passion, knew not what course to take. Mihr-ul-Nissa had been betrothed by her father to Ali Kuli Sher Afgan, a Turkoman nobleman of great renown. Salim applied to his father Akbar, who sternly refused to commit a piece of injustice, though in favour of the heir of his throne. The prince retired abashed, and Mihr-ul-Nissa became the wife of Sher Afgan. The latter, however, suffered in his prospects for not having made a voluntary resignation of the lady to the enamoured prince. Though Salim durst make no open attack upon his fortunate rival during the life of Akbar, men in office worshipped the rising sun, and slighted Sher Afgan. He became disgusted and left the court of Agra. He retired into the province of Bengal and obtained from the Subahdar of that country the governorship of the district of Burdwan.

—J. Stewart,

2. *The wisest of the Moghuls, Emperor Akbar always sought advice and counsel from his ministers and courtiers who*



A MOGHUL DANCER
From a Moghal painting in the Musee Guimet

his mortification, the accomplished Parsian shortly after became the wife of Sher Afgan.

Salim was from that moment the implacable foe of his successful rival. He could not bear to hear the hated name mentioned in his presence, and, with cowardly vindictiveness, determined upon his destruction. He kept these feelings a secret from his father, who esteemed the Turkoman too highly to approve of the prince's hostility towards him, and had, moreover, expressed his satisfaction at the latter's marriage with Mihr-ul-Nissa. Salim, however, secretly fomented jealousies among the nobles against the popular as well as imperial favourite. These were easily excited; for there will never be found wanting persons ready to traduce those to whom they are conscious of being inferior in moral excellence; and especially in courts where ambition is the ruling passion, nothing can be less difficult than to provoke the envy of men whose sole aim is aggrandisement, and who are therefore naturally disposed to think ill of any who happen to contravene those aims, or to cross the path of their ambition. The prince, therefore, had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. He secretly disseminated calumnies to the injury of Sher Afgan, who in disgust retired from the court into Bengal, where he obtained from the governor the vicegerency of Burdwan, a considerable district of that province.

Here he lived undisturbed until the death of Akbar, which caused the sincere regret of the whole nation, who

were noted for their intelligence and good sense. He consulted the illustrious minister of state, Abul Fazal, about the course of action he would take on the delicate question of his son's infatuation for Meher-un-Nissa. After weighing pros and cons, they decided to disapprove of such a marriage. They thought it expedient to marry her to some other person and send her far away from the capital, beyond the reach of the Prince. They also planned to depute the Heir-apparent to Rajputana on a military mission. In that case, the momentary passion for Meher would subside from the ambitious mind of the prince.

in mourning the decease of their Emperor deplored the loss of a great and a good man. When Prince Salim became sovereign, his passion for the daughter of Ghyas revived in full force. The restraint being removed under which the smothered flame had been so long and so painfully suppressed, it burst forth with increased fierceness. He was now absolute; and being determined to possess the object of his disappointed love, he made advances towards a reconciliation with Sher Afgan; but the brave Turkoman for a time resisted all his importunities, perceiving their object, and resolving to part neither with his wife nor with his honour, as he could not resign the one without relinquishing the other. His strength was prodigious, and his bravery equal to his strength; his integrity was unimpeached, his reputation high, and he was alike feared and respected by all classes. Upon every occasion where danger was imminent, he was foremost to encounter it: while his desperate valour was the theme of many a romance and of many a song. His bodily vigour was so great that he had slain a tiger single handed; from which circumstance he obtained the cognomen of Sher Afgan, the Tiger-slayer, his original name being Istajly. He was, however, no less esteemed for his virtues than for his bravery; and Mihr-ul-Nissa fully appreciated his rare endowments. She was proud of his reputation. To her the Emperor's feelings were no secret; but she avoided his presence, in obedience to the wishes of her husband, who was not altogether without his suspicions that the hostility which the new sovereign manifested towards him was solely on her account. He continued, therefore, in the province of Bengal, without visiting the imperial capital.

Not long, however, after Jahangir had ascended the throne of the Moghuls, Sher Afgan was invited to court, whither, after repeated solicitations, he repaired, trusting to his own high reputation for security against any tyrannical exercise of the sovereign power. Upon his arrival he was much caressed by the Emperor, in order to lull

suspicion. Open and generous himself, he suspected no treachery in others. He left his wife at Burdwan, not willing to expose her to the chance of attention from the sovereign, that might keep alive former predilections, and renew his royal rival's criminal hostility.

The young Emperor's court was splendid in the extreme. He was fond of state; but hunting being his passion, a day was appointed for the chase. All the chief nobles of the empire attended, hoping to have an opportunity of exhibiting before their royal master their skill and prowess in a pursuit at all times extremely dangerous in eastern countries. A vast train, swelling to the number of an army, issued from the gates of Lahore. The cavalcade was prodigious. Upwards of five hundred elephants, upon which rode the Emperor and his court, led the van towards a jungle where the quarry was expected to be roused. The howdah of the royal elephant was covered by a silken canopy, and its whole caparison profusely ornamented with precious metals. Thousands of spears glittered in the sun, the rays of which were reflected in streams of glowing light from those various arms borne by this motly cavalcade. The neighing of steeds was mingled with the busy hum of men who thronged to the scene of exciting enjoyment.

Sher Afgan accompanied the court on horseback, armed only with the sword with which he had slain a tiger—having by that act immortalised his name in the annals of his country. His royal master showed him a very marked respect, occasionally consulting him respecting the chase; thus aggravating the jealousy of the nobles, already sufficiently fierce against him. He received the Emperor's courtesies with a cold but modest respect, not entirely forgetting former unkindness, though without suspicion of future injury.

The royal party at length entered the jungle, where the forest haunts of the lion and tiger were shortly explored. The hunters soon enclosed a mighty beast of the

latter species, of which Jahangir being apprised, immediately proceeded to the spot. He began to entertain a hope that the period so long desired was arrived when he should have an opportunity of exposing the life of his former rival in an encounter from which the latter would



JAHANGIR

From a contemporary painting in the collection
of Musée Guimet, Paris

have little chance of escaping. Seeing the tiger at a short distance, surrounded by hunters, lashing the ground with its tail and giving other tokens of savage hostility the despot demanded of those around him—who would venture to attack the ferocious beast?

All stood silent and confounded. They had not expected such a proposal; nor did they appear to entertain any wish to expose their lives in a conflict in which more danger than glory would be reaped. As none of them advanced, and the Emperor began to knit his brows and show symptoms of displeasure, Sher Afgan already entertained a hope that the enterprise would devolve upon him; but, to his extreme mortification, three noblemen stepped forward and offered to encounter the forest tyrant. Jahangir cast upon the bold Turkoman a glance of such unequivocal expression that his pride kindled, and he longed to show how little backward he was to engage the brindled foe; but as three nobles had first challenged the encounter, he could not set aside their prior claim to a distinction which they insisted upon striving for.

Upon receiving the approbation of their royal master, they severally prepared for the encounter, dismounting from their elephants, and arming themselves with sword, and shield. Sher Afgan, fearing that he was likely to be rivalled, and that his fame would be tarnished by inferior men undertaking a conflict which by his silence he might be supposed to have declined advanced, and presenting himself before the sovereign, said firmly: "To attack an unarmed creature with weapons is neither fair nor manly; it is taking an advantage of an animal which cannot plead against such injustice but by a fierce retaliation. Such is not in accordance with the character of the truly brave. All manual contests should be undertaken upon equal terms. God has given limbs and sinews to man as well as to tigers, and has imparted reason to the former in order to countervail the deficiency of strength. Let the nobles of your imperial majesty then lay aside their arms and

attack the enemy with those only with which God has provided them. If they shrink from such an encounter, I am prepared to undertake it.'

Jahangir rewarded the speaker with a smile of gracious approbation; but his courtiers, one and all, declined such a perilous contest insisting upon the madness of the enterprise. To the Emperor's infinite surprise and delight, the bold Turkoman instantly cast aside his sword and shield, and prepared to engage the tiger unarmed.

The circle of hunters, which had surrounded the forest tyrant, opened to admit the champion. The ferocious beast with which he was to engage lay at the foot of a tree, snarling hideously as its enemy approached, erecting the fur upon its tail and back, passing its tongue every now and then over the terrific fangs with which its jaws were armed, but seeming ill disposed to commence the contest. Sher Afgan was stripped to his trousers, and his fine muscular frame, a model for an Indian Apollo, exhibited its noble proportions as he advanced cautiously but firmly towards his foe. The tiger lay upon its belly without attempting to stir, nevertheless giving evident tokens of a determination to retaliate if attacked. The ponderous paws projected from beneath its chest; and upon these it occasionally rested its head, until roused by the approach of its adversary. Every eye was fixed upon the scene; every heart throbbed with the strongest emotion of anxiety. The sovereign alone sat upon his elephant, apparently calm and undisturbed; but the deep flush upon his cheek showed that he took no ordinary interest in the approaching encounter. He did not utter a word as he saw the man whom he considered doomed to inevitable destruction march resolutely up to the prostrate tiger and strike it in the ribs with his foot. The animal, now excited to ferocious resistance, instantly sprang upon his legs, but crept backward with its face to the enemy and its belly to the ground. Sher Afgan advanced as it retreated, keeping his eyes fixed upon those

of the enraged beast. At length the latter suddenly turned, and bounded forward; but was stopped by the spears of the hunters, who still encircled it at a distance, all armed to prevent its escape. Finding its purpose foiled, it turned, and being beyond the influence of the Turkoman's eye, prepared to make its perilous spring.

Sher Afgan now retreated in his turn, and, pausing near a tree, awaited the approach of his enemy. It instantly bounded onward, sweeping its tail above the ground with an uncertain motion, but without uttering a sound. The brave champion, who from experience was well acquainted with the habits of those animals which are the terror of the jungles and their immediate neighbourhood, well knew that the creature was about to spring. Placing his right foot forward, and planting his left firmly against the projecting root of the tree, he calmly awaited the menaced peril. The tiger crouched, and uttered a short growl, projected its body forward with a celerity and force which nothing could have resisted; but the wary Turkoman leaped aside as the living projectile was about to fall upon him, and turning quickly, seized his baffled foe by the tail; then swinging it round with a strength and dexterity that astonished every beholder, brought its head in such violent contact with the tree, that for several seconds it was completely stunned. After a while, however it recovered, but lay still and panting, not at all relishing, as it seemed, a renewal of the conflict. As the victory was not yet decided, Sher Afgan again approached the prostrate beast in order to rouse it to resistance. He kicked it several times, but it only growled, lashed its tail, showed its fangs—remaining perfectly passive under these acts of aggression.

The hero, tired of this indecisive mode of warfare, seized it again by the tail, and, swinging it round as he had already done, brought its head once more in stunning contact with the tree. The blow, though severe, did not produce the same effect as before; for the enraged animal,

suddenly rising to the full height of its stature, turned on its aggressor with a savage roar, and seized him by the fleshy part of the thigh behind. As his trousers were loose the tiger was somewhat deceived, and therefore, fortunately, did not take so large a mouthful as it no doubt would have done had the limb been entirely naked. Sher Afgan instantly grasped it by the windpipe, and, squeezing it with all his might, soon obliged the creature to quit its hold; but with a violent twist it freed itself from the strong grip of its adversary, and instantly renewed the encounter.

The struggle now became indeed terrific, and the anxiety of the spectators increased in proportion. Jahangir could no longer control the feeling by which he was overborne. His parted lips, between which the tongue protruded with a quivering nervousness of motion, his eyelids so raised as to discover the entire orb of his eager, restless eyes, the tremulous aspect of his whole frame—showed the extent of his interest in the issue of this unnatural strife.

By this time the tiger had again rallied, and having raised itself upon its hind-legs, struck both its fore-paws upon the Turkoman's breast, tearing the flesh from the bone. Sher Afgan fell under the weight of this deadly assault; but, still undismayed, after a desperate effort he contrived to roll over upon his panting foe, now nearly exhausted from its exertions and by the severe blows it had received and forcing his hand between its extended jaws, gripped it so firmly by the root of the tongue, that in a few seconds it lay strangled beneath his grasp. He then rose streaming with blood, pointed to his dead enemy, made a salaam to the Emperor, and quitted the field grievously lacerated.

The Emperor was astounded at the issue. The champion was borne home in a palanquin, and for several weeks his life was despaired of. To the surprise of Jahangir, Sher Afgan eventually recovered, though he

carried the marks of the tiger's claws to his grave. The royal rival was nevertheless determined not to forgo his purpose of destroying this remarkable man, though he feared to do it openly. Meanwhile the hero went abroad, everywhere unattended, utterly unsuspecting of a design against his life. He was not conscious of having offended a human creature, and therefore did not suppose that any man living could desire his death. He lived in retirement; but whenever he appeared at court, which he occasionally did, he was always treated by the sovereign with marked respect and great apparent cordiality. This, however, was only to mask the most sanguinary intentions, which were no secret to many of the nobles, who, in common with their master, desired the destruction of a brave man because he was a hated rival.

Private orders had been given to the driver of a large elephant to waylay the Turkoman and tread him to death. The opportunity did not immediately occur, as the victim went abroad at uncertain periods; and though his movements were watched, it was found a difficult matter to come upon him at a favourable moment. One day, however, as he was returning from the public baths through a narrow street, observing an elephant approaching, he ordered his palanquin-bearers to turn aside and permit it to pass. As the huge animal came near, he at once perceived that there was no room for it to pass without crushing the palanquin, and thus endangering the lives of himself and attendants.

The elephant still came onward. Sher Afgan called to the mahoot to stop, but his order was disregarded. The phlegmatic Hindu sitting upon its neck apparently in a state of half-consciousness, took no heed of the peril of the party before him. The nobleman, seeing that it was impossible to avoid the approaching danger except by making a timely retreat, ordered his bearers to turn and carry him back to the baths; but they, terrified at the evident hazard to which they were exposed, threw down

the palanquin and fled, leaving their master to settle the question of priority of right to a passage on the Emperor's highway. The hero, undismayed by the formidable aspect of the jeopardy by which he was menaced, sprang instant-



JAHANGIR AND ONE OF HIS WIVES

From "Miniature Painting of Persia, India, and Turkey"
by F. R. Martin

ly from the ground, drew his sword, and, before the elephant could accomplish its fatal purpose, severed its trunk close to the root. The gigantic animal immediately dropped and expired. The mahut leaped from its neck as it was in the act of falling, and escaped.

Sher Afgan, suspecting that in urging the elephant upon him the fellow had been actuated by that personal feeling which so generally exists between Hindus and Moslems, forebore to pursue him, thinking the mean passions of a hireling too contemptible to rouse his indignation. He therefore allowed the offender to escape unmolested, and coolly wiping the blade of his sword, returned it to the scabbard.

Jahangir witnessed the whole scene. He had placed himself at a small lattice that overlooked the street. He was perfectly amazed, but disappointment and vexation banished from his bosom the better feelings of nature. Sher Afgan waited upon him and communicated what had passed; the Emperor extolled his bravery with warmth, and thus escaped his suspicion.

CHAPTER IV

REPEATED disappointment only served the more to exasperate the sovereign's jealousy. It raged like a furnace within him; for to exercise a due control over their actions is not the general character of despots. His peace of mind was perpetually disturbed by the fierceness of his emotions, and he became more than ever bent upon the death of his successful rival in the affections of Mihr-ul-Nissa.

Sher Afgan was not permitted to remain long unmolested. Kutb-ud-din, Subahdar or Governor of Bengal and foster brother of the Emperor, knowing his wishes, and in order to ensure his future favour, hired forty ruffians to assassinate the dreaded nobleman. So confident was the latter in his own strength and valour that he took no precaution to protect himself against secret or open enemies. He lived in a solitary house in which he retained only an aged porter, all his other servants occupying apartments at a distance. Relying upon his own courage and the vigour of his arm, he had no apprehension either of the secret assassin or the open foe.

This was a tempting opportunity. The murderers were engaged, and had been promised such a reward as should urge them to the most desperate exertions in order to ensure the consummation of their employer's wishes. They entered the apartment while their victim was asleep. A lamp hung from the ceiling and threw its dim light upon him as he reclined in profound slumber. There was no mistaking the hero, as he lay with his noble head upon his arm, his expansive forehead turned towards the light, every line blended into one smooth unbroken surface denoting the perfect placidity of repose. Over his muscular frame was lightly thrown a thin coverlid, which did not entirely conceal its beautiful proportions, exhibited in the indistinct but traceable outline of the figure beneath. He slept profoundly. The murderers approached the bed and raised their daggers to strike; when one of them, touched with remorse at the idea of such an unmanly assault upon a man who had so signalled his courage and virtues, cried out, under an impulse of awakened conscience, "Hold! are we men? What! Forty to one, and afraid to encounter him awake?"

This timely interposition of the assassin's remorse saved the life of his intended victim; for the Turkoman, aroused by the manly expostulation, started from his bed, seized his sword, and retiring backwards before the

assassins had all entered, reached the corner of the apartment, where he prepared to defend himself to the last extremity. As he retreated, he had drawn the couch before him, thus preventing the immediate contact of his enemies, who endeavoured in vain to reach him; and as they were only armed with daggers he cut down several of them without receiving a single wound. Urged on, however, by the great amount of the reward offered, the murderers still pressed upon him, and succeeded at length in dragging the couch from his grasp, though not before he had caused several others to pay for their temerity with their lives. He was at length exposed to the full operation of their brutal fury. Ten of his enemies already lay dead upon the floor, showing fatal evidence of the strength and celerity of his arm; there, however, remained thirty to vanquish; and, placing his back against the wall, the hero prepared for the unequal and deadly struggle.

Seeing him now entirely exposed to their assault, the ruffians rushed simultaneously forward, in the hope of being able to despatch him at once with their daggers; but they so encumbered each other by suddenly crowding upon their victim in their anxiety to prevent his escape that they could not strike. He, meanwhile, taking advantage of the confusion laid several of them dead at his feet: nevertheless they pressed forward, and the same result followed. Shifting his ground, but still managing to keep his back against the wall, he defeated all their attempts; and such was his fearful precision in employing his sword, that not a man came within its sweep without receiving practical experience of the strength with which it was wielded. Besides those already slain, many others of the assailants fell desperately wounded. At length the rest, fearing the extermination of their whole band, betook themselves to flight, and left him without a wound.

The man who had warned Sher Afgan of his danger stood fixed in mute astonishment at the prowess of him

whom he had received a commission to murder. He had been so paralysed, that he could neither join in the attack, nor defend his victim from the sanguinary assault which the latter had so heroically defeated. He had no time for meditation. The charge had been so sudden, and the defence so marvellous, that his mind remained in a state of stagnation, and was restored to its proper tone only upon seeing the extraordinary issue. Perceiving himself to be alone with the man whom he had undertaken to destroy for base bribe, his heart sank within him—he felt that he deserved to die; but his intended victim advanced, and kindly taking his hand, welcomed him as his deliverer. Having ascertained from the man's unreluctant confession by whom the assassins had been hired the hero dismissed him with a liberal benefaction.

This remarkable exploit was repeated from mouth to mouth with a thousand exaggerations; so that wherever Sher Afgan appeared, he was followed and pointed at as a man of superhuman powers: Songs and romances were written to extol his prowess and magnanimity. He was cheered by the populace wherever he approached. Mothers held up their babes to behold this extraordinary warrior, blessing him as he passed, and praying that their sons might emulate his virtues. He was flattered by these universal suffrages in his favour; nevertheless, in order to avoid recurrence of perils similar to those from which he had so recently escaped, he retired to Burdwan.

Meanwhile the Emperor, burning with secret rage at hearing the valour of his rival, the theme of every tongue, gave orders to his creature, the Subahdar of Bengal, to seek a more favourable opportunity than he had before availed himself of, to destroy this detested nobleman; for such was his astonishing strength and dexterity, that the Governor dared not attack him openly.

Being now at a distance from court, the bold Turkoman thought himself beyond the influence of his sovereign's jealousy, and, with the natural frankness of his character,

immediately cast aside all suspicion of mischief. The Subahdar coming with a great retinue to Burdwan about sixty miles from the modern capital of Bengal, with a pretence of making tour of the territory placed under his political superintendence, communicated to his officers the secret of his mission. They heard him with silent pleasure; for most of the nobles being jealous of a rival's popularity, with a mean and dastardly spirit joined readily in the scheme for his destruction.

Unsuspecting of any hostile intention towards him, the devoted nobleman went out to meet the Subahdar as he was entering the town, and the latter affected to treat him with great cordiality. He rode by the governor's elephant, familiarly conversing with the nobles who formed his suite, and frequently receiving a gracious smile of approbation from the Emperor's vicegerent. He was completely thrown off his guard by this apparently courteous bearing; and abandoning himself to the generous warmth of his nature invited the nobles to his abode, resolving to entertain them with a munificence equal to the liberality of his disposition: a determination which he knew his wife, the beautiful Mihr-ul-Nissa, would not be backward in fulfilling. Full of these hospitable resolutions, he pressed forward with a gaiety which showed the utter absence of suspicion.

In the progress of the cavalcade, a pikeman, pretending that Sher Afgan was in the way, rudely struck his horse. In a moment the latter's suspicions were roused; his countenance darkened, and he cast around him a look of fiery indignation. Without an instant's delay he drew his sword and clove the offender to the earth. Knowing that no soldier would have thus acted without orders, the insulted noble immediately saw that his life was aimed at, and directly spurring his horse towards the elephant of the treacherous Subahdar, he tore down the howdah, seized the cowardly Kutb-ud-din by the throat, and buried his sword in the traitor's body before any of his guards

could rescue him; then turning upon the noblemen, five were almost instantly sacrificed to his just revenge.

Reeking with their blood, the avenger stood before the host, sternly braving the retribution which he saw them preparing to inflict and hailing them with a loud defiance. He expected no quarter, and therefore determined not to yield without a struggle. His mind was braced to the extreme tension of desperate energy, and he resolved that the coveted prize of his death should be dearly won. Those who were within the immediate reach of his arm he slew without distinction, and such was the fatal celerity of his motions that the enemy fled before him in dismay. He did not pursue, but challenged the unequal strife. Like a grim lion, he stood defiant before them, spotted with the gore of the slain, and prepared for fresh slaughter. but there was not a foe daring enough to approach him.

Terrified at his prowess, the solders began to discharge their arrows and matchlocks at him from a distance. His horse, struck by a ball in the forehead, fell dead under him. Springing upon his feet, he slew several of the enemy who had ventured to rush forward in the hope of despatching him while encumbered with the housings of his fallen charger. They fled at the sight of their slain comrades, and left their unvanquished destroyer to the aim of his distant foes, who fired upon him without intermission. Covered with wounds and bleeding at every pore, the still undaunted lion-slayer called upon the Subahdar's officers to advance and meet him in single combat, but they one and all declined the encounter. They saw that certain death to each of them must be the issue of such a contest. It was evident, moreover, that their victim could not escape the aim of so many enemies.

At length, seeing his end approaching, the brave Turkoman, like a devout Moslem, turned his face towards Mecca, threw some dust upon his head by way of ablution, there being no water near, and standing up, calm and

undismayed, before the armed files of his murderers, received at one discharge six balls in his body, and expired without a groan. Thus perished one of the greatest heroes whose exploits have had a conspicuous place in the histories of nations.

The beautiful widow was immediately transported to Delhi, but Jahangir refused to see her, whether from remorse or policy is uncertain. He ordered her to be confined in one of the worst apartments of the harem. This was exceedingly galling to her sensitive and haughty spirit.¹

The harem of an eastern prince is at once the penetralia of the political and social sanctuary, whence emanate all the cabals and conspiracies so rife in the cabinets of Moslem potentates; it may, therefore, be as well to give a brief description of a Moslem sovereign's domestic establishment.

In the harem are educated the Moghul princes and the principal youth among the nobles destined for posts of responsibility in the empire. It is generally separated from the palace, but so nearly contiguous as to be of ready access. None are admitted within its apartments except the Emperor and those immediately attached to its several offices, the duties of which are performed by women. It

1. *Meher-ul-Nissa was married to Sher Afgan when she was sixteen. At the age of 33, she was brought to Agra as a widow. During all these years she lived with him, bore and brought up his children. In face of these facts, it would be really presumptuous to assert that she had no tender feelings for Sher Afgan.*

A new problem faced her as she reached Delhi. When she stood on the threshold of the palace, the emperor suddenly commanded—"The widow of Sher Khan shall not be brought to the presence of the Emperor. She shall be taken to the apartments of the Dowager-Empress, and shall be employed as an attendant of the Emperor's mother."

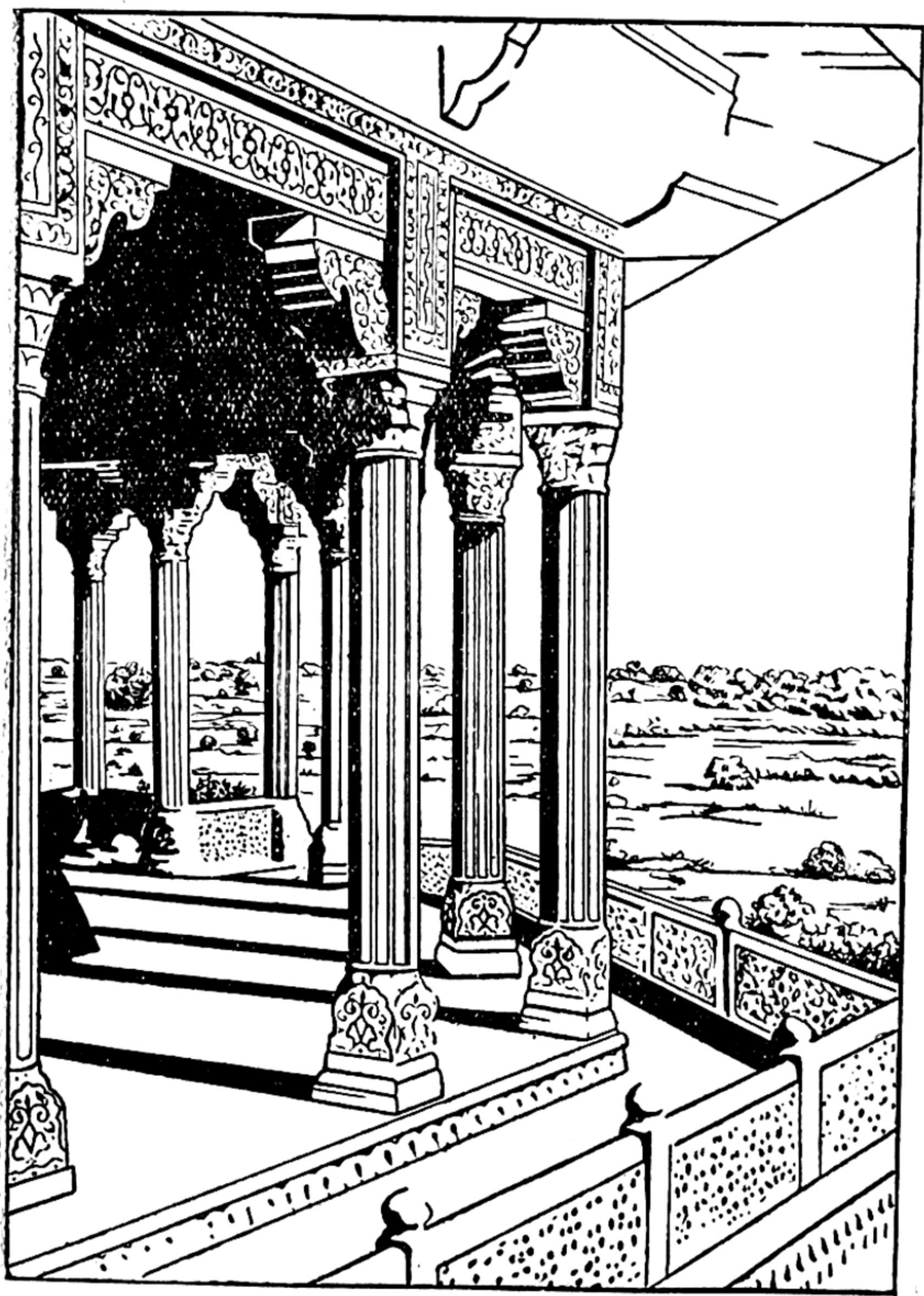
It is recorded that Jahangir did not feel the slightest compunction in ordering men to be flayed alive or in witnessing the horrible sight of having thousands of unfortunate men and women trampled by elephants for trumpery offences. And the

is generally enclosed by lofty walls, and surrounded by spacious gardens, laid out with all the splendour of eastern magnificence, where every luxury is obtained which the appetite may demand or money can procure. Those inmates who form the matrimonial confederacy of the Moghul potentate are among the most beautiful girls which the empire can furnish. They are taught embroidery, music, and dancing by certain old women hired to instruct them in every blandishment that may captivate the senses and stimulate the passions. These lovely captives are never permitted to appear abroad except when the Emperor travels, and then they are conveyed in litters closed by curtains, or in boats with small cabins, admitting the light and air only through narrow Venetian blinds.

The apartments of the harem are very splendid, always, however, of course in proportion to the wealth of the prince. The favourite object of his affections exhibits the dignity and enjoys the privilege of a queen, though of a queen in captivity. While her beauty lasts she is frequently regarded with a feeling almost amounting to idolatry, but when that beauty passes away the warmth of love subsides, her person no longer charms, her voice ceases to impart delight, her faded cheeks and sharpened tones become disagreeable memorials of the past. Neither her song nor her lute is now heard with pleasure, for in the beautiful imagery of the Persian Poet, "When the roses

same Jahangir was not displeased by the pronounced expression of the unclouded mind of this beautiful helpless widow. Jahangir was a man above everything else. In the first flush of his youth, he fell in violent love with Mihr-ul-Nissa and behaved like an insensate lover and committed all sorts of indiscretion. And as if in apprehension of a relapse of former amorous weakness, he kept the object of his temptation at bay and placed her in the service of his mother.

Though she worked at the imperial behest, as attendant to the Emperor's mother, she did not accept the allowance sanctioned by the treasury. She eked out her living by selling her etchings and sewings to the market of Delhi's Chandni Chawk. She spent four long years in this fashion.



THE JASSAMINE TOWER AT AGRA FORT
Once the Apartment of the Chief Sultana

wither and the bower loses its sweetness, you have no longer the tale of the nightingale."



NUR JAHAN

After a Moghul painting in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The favourite, however, while she continues her ascendancy over the heart of her lord, is treated with sovereign respect throughout the harem. She smokes her golden-tubed hooka, the mouthpiece studded with gems; and enjoys the fresh morning breeze under a varanda that overlooks the garden of the palace, attended by her damsels, only second to herself in attraction of person and splendour of attire.

"Her smiling countenance resplendent shines
With youth and loveliness; her lips disclose
Teeth white as jasmine blossoms; silky curls
Luxuriant shade her cheeks; and every limb
Of slightest texture, moves with natural grace,
Like moonbeams gliding through the yielding air."

Here she reclines in oblivious repose upon a rich embroidered carpet from the most celebrated looms of Persia. Through an atmosphere of the richest incense she breathes the choicest perfumes of Arabia the happy, and has everything around her that can administer to sensual delight; still she is generally an unhappy being. She dwells in the midst of splendid misery and ungratifying profusion, while all within herself is desolation and hopelessness. Her sympathies are either warped or stifled; her heart is blighted and her mind degraded. She cannot join in the enthusiasms of the inimitable Hafiz: "The breath of the western gale will soon shed musk around; the old world will again be young," but languishes, as the seasons return, in the most debasing captivity, and feels that the western gale breathes not upon her either the freshness of freedom or of joy.

CHAPTER V

THE daughter of Ghyas was a woman of haughty spirit, and could ill brook the indifference with which she was treated by her former admirer. It preyed deeply upon her mind. She was not ignorant of the Emperor's hostility towards her late husband, though unconscious that it had been the cause of his death. She severely felt her bereavement; and the change from perfect freedom to captivity—from the affection of a generous husband to the indifference of a capricious master, deeply mortified her. Meanwhile, however, she was not idle: the resources of her mind were no less fertile than extraordinary.

Being very expert at working tapestry and all kinds of embroidery, and in painting silks with the richest devices, she applied herself with great assiduity to those employments. By intense application, she acquired an expertness which enabled her to transcend the works of the best manufacturers in the empire. In a short time the exquisite productions of her taste and skill became the talk of the capital, and she immediately became a person of importance, apart from her being the widow of the renowned Sher Afgan. The ladies of the noblemen at the Court of Delhi and Agra would wear nothing upon grand occasions but what came from the hands of the lovely Mihr-ul-Nissa; she was consequently soon pronounced the oracle of fashion and of taste.

While she affected an extreme simplicity in her own dress, she attired her attendants in the richest tissues and brocades, making those who had attractive persons the vehicle of setting off to advantage the works of her own industry. She thus amassed a considerable sum of money, and became more celebrated in her obscurity than she had hitherto been as the wife of the most distinguish-

ed hero of his age. Her milder glories had been hitherto eclipsed by the predominancy of his.

Notwithstanding the success of her exertions in the occupation to which she had devoted herself, the daughter of Ghyas the Parsian was still an unhappy woman. She loathed her captivity: she felt the moral degradation to which she was subjected, and that the influence which she imagined herself born to exercise was extinguished by an untoward destiny. She had always entertained a secret conviction that the strange events of her birth portended a mortal distinction of singular splendour; it therefore mortified her to find that she continued to live celebrated only as a fabricator of brocades and tissues. Her spirits drooped: she grew peevish and irritable. Her occupation became a toil, and she talked of relinquishing it, when one day she was apprised that there was an old woman in the harem who pretended to look into the future and read the destinies of mankind. Mihr-ul-Nissa immediately sent for the prophetess. The crone appeared before her, bending beneath the weight of years. Upon seeing the widow of the late Sher Afgan, she lifted her skinny arms, clasped her bony fingers together, and muttered a few incoherent words which had more the seeming of madness than of prophecy; there was, however, more sanity than madness in the mummary—it was sort of label to her draught of foreknowledge.

“Well, mother,” inquired Mihr-ul-Nissa mildly, “what do those strange words portend? I would know something of my destiny, if it is in thy power to read it: if not, take this, and leave a blessing behind thee; for an aged woman’s curse is a dreadful thing to hang over any one’s head.” Saying this, she placed a gold mohor upon the beldam’s right palm, who giving a chuckle of delight, mumbled forth her vaticination with a distorted grin of satisfaction. “You were born in a desert to die upon a throne. She who as a babe was embraced by a reptile, as a woman will be embraced by a king. The

infant that was brought into the world amidst famine will go out of it amidst plenty. The star, so puny at thy birth, will expand into a sun. I am not deceived—believe me, and leave here a proof of your faith." She extended her hand, and having received another golden recompense, retired.

Mihr-ul-Nissa was willing to believe the prophecy of the sibyl. There was something in it, in spite of its vague generalities, that harmonized closely with those silent presentiments which she had for some time past permitted herself to cherish. She was ambitious, and a thirst after distinction was her ruling passion. Her mind was too strongly fortified against superstition to render her the dupe of a juggler's predictions; nevertheless, the mere promise of aggrandisement was agreeable to her ear, and she therefore lent a willing attention to what her reason despised, not caring to pay for the indulgence thousand times above its value. She cherished the promise of worldly exaltation, not because she believed the hag who made it had a further insight into futurity than her neighbours, but only because the theme was grateful to her sensitive ambition, and there moreover existed a strong presentiment within her, that she should rise from the grovelling condition to which she was now reduced, and be exalted in proportion to her present degradation.

Actuated by this feeling, she did everything in her power to give currency to her reputation. She well knew that her taste was the theme of general approbation, and the marvellous power of her beauty began to be talked of beyond the precincts of the harem. A noble of distinction, holding a high office in the state, offered her his hand and it was soon noised abroad that she was about to become his wife. She secretly encouraged this report, though she had given him no pledge, hoping that it would come to higher ears and procure her an interview with the Emperor.

This state of things could not last long; and when

pressed by the impatient noble for a definitive answer to his offer of marriage, to his astonishment and that of all who were acquainted with the circumstance, she declined it. Mortified at his repulse, he determined to obtain by force what was denied to his entreaty, and took an opportunity of violating the sanctity of the harem by appearing before her. She was alone in her apartment when the disappointed lover entered. He commenced by upbraiding her with her caprice, which she bore with dignified patience, until, irritated by her calmness, the nobleman seized her arm and roused her indignation by the most offensive menaces. He being a powerful man, she was as an infant in his grasp; nevertheless with the impulse of roused passion, she suddenly burst from his embrace, rushed into an inner chamber, and, seizing a crease, commanded the intruder to retire. Maddened by disappointment, he sprang forward to repeat the violence which he had already offered; she instantly raised her arm and buried the dagger in his body. He fell reeking in his blood. He was borne from the apartment insensible; and a confinement of three months to his bed, under the daily peril of death, taught him a lesson never to pass from memory but with his life. Other suitors sought the hand of the Persian's daughter, but all with like success.

The accomplishments of this singular woman were soon carried to the ears of the Emperor, who had probably by this time forgotten the ascendancy which she once held over his heart; or perhaps it was that the mortification of her having been the wife of another rendered him sullen in his determination not to see her. He resolved, however, now to visit her, in order to have ocular proof whether the voice of public report were a truth or an exaggeration. One evening therefore he proceeded in state to her apartment.¹ At the sight of her unrivalled

1. *The Emperor was very much affected by the sight of the widowed Mihr-ul-Nissa. On the Id day, when the few maids*

beauty, all his former passion revived in an instant. She was reclining on a sofa in an undress robe of plain white muslin, which exhibited her faultless shape to the best advantage, and became her better than the richest brocades of Bagdad or the finest embroideries of Kashmir. As soon as the Emperor entered, the siren rose with an agitation that served only to heighten her charms and fixed her eyes upon the ground with well-dissembled confusion. Jehangir stood mute with amazement, and rapture took immediate possession of his soul; he felt, if he did not utter, the sentiment of an eminent poet of his own religion:

“Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
And bid these arms thy neck infold;
That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
Would give thy lover more delight
Than all Bokhara’s vaunted gold,
Than all the gems of Samarkand.”

He was dazzled by the perfection of her form, the dignity of her mein, and the transcendent loveliness of her features. Advancing to where she stood with downcast eyes and suffused cheeks, blushing in the dazzling plenitude of her beauty, he took her hand and said: “Sun of women, the Emperor of a great and mighty nation throws himself

who served Mihr-ul-Nissa were dressed in ceremonial clothing, she in her humble widow’s weeds was engaged in her daily avocations of sewing and painting. To the Emperor, Mihr was not an ordinary type of widowhood. He knew very well under what tragic circumstances Mihr was brought to the court, and was consigned to an ignoble obscurity.

At the sight of the Emperor, Mihr rose from her seat and bowed to his feet with folded hands, she awaited his command. After exchanging usual courtesies, the Emperor enquired the reason of her humble garments in contrast to the expensive dress of her serving maids. She replied: “I have attired my maids according to my desire, I consider it my bounden duty to be satisfied with the state in which my master has ordained me to remain. I feel myself honoured by accepting his will as commandment.”

at thy feet as an act of just homage to thy beauty. Wilt thou be the Sultana of Jahangir the predominant?"

"A subject has no voice," replied the enchantress; "and a woman especially can have no will but that of her sovereign: it is his privilege to command—her heritage is to obey."¹

Jhangir again took her hand, declared his resolution to make her his Empress, and immediately a proclamation was issued for the celebration of the royal nuptials with the lovely relict of the late Sher Afgan.

A general festival was observed throughout the empire. Those rich embroideries which had lately been the admiration of the ladies of Delhi no longer issued from the harem. The humble embroidress cast aside the distaff for the crown, and in the issue proved to be one of the most extraordinary women which the pen of history has celebrated. She became the principal director of the complex machine of government. The name of Mihr-ul-Nissa was exchanged for that of Nur Mahal, "The Light of the Harem."

From this moment she was acknowledged as the favourite wife of the Emperor of the Moghuls. In the climax of her exaltation her name was again changed to Nur Jahan, or, "The Light of the World." As a distinguishing mark of her pre-eminence in the sovereign's affections, she was allowed to assume the title of Shahe, or Empress. Her family was held next in the rank to the princes of the blood, and advanced to places of the

1. It was not unknown to Mihr-ul-Nissa that Jahangir in his prime of youth and at first sight fell a prey to her charms. As a highly intelligent woman, she did not fail to understand why the Emperor summoned her to Agra immediately after Sher Afgan, the only obstacle to his marriage with Mihr-ul-Nissa, was removed by his hidden hand.

Mihr-ul-Nissa, on her part had fallen in passionate love with Selim in her earlier years, so, when the Emperor eagerly invited her with open arms, it was but natural—though it might be profane—that she could not ignore his overtures.

highest trust. Its members were admitted to privileges which had never before been enjoyed by subjects under



NUR JAHAN

After a Moghul painting.

the Moghul domination. The current coin of the realm was stamped with her name, as well as with that of the sovereign! She converted the harem into a court, where the mysteries of state policy were discussed with a freedom and a power seldom known under despotic governments.

It was from the harem that those celebrated decrees

were fulminated—for though they passed in the Emperor's name, it is credibly attested that they emanated from his Sultana—which rendered the reign of Jahangir one of the most politically prosperous in the annals of Mahomedan history. Her influence exceeded that of any other person in the empire, not even excepting the sovereign; and perhaps, under the rigid scrupulosity of Moghul policy with regard to women sharing in the administration of the state, there never has been an instance of one of the sex attaining an ascendancy so paramount, and such perfect political control over the destinies of so many subject principalities as the renowned Nur Jahan.

CHAPTER VI

A few years after the elevation of this extraordinary woman, Khurram, the third son of Jahangir, who afterwards ascended the imperial throne under the assumed designation of Shah Jahan, began to interrupt the harmony of the state. He had been sent with a powerful army into the Deccan to quell a formidable confederacy against the reigning authority, and having succeeded in reducing the insurgents to obedience, began to show his ambitious designs upon the crown. Under the most plausible pretences, and while in command of the army with which he had just quelled a dangerous insurrection, he persuaded the Emperor to put into his hands Khusru, Jahangir's eldest son, and consequently heir to the throne, who had been imprisoned for rebellion. It soon became evident why he had been so urgent to obtain the person of his rebellious brother. Khusru was the grand obstacle

between him and the crown. The traitor Khurram now shortly threw off the mask, and publicly declared his designs. His success in the Deccan had endeared him to the troops; his courage had gained their confidence, and his liberality secured their affections. Confiding in his imagined power, he disregarded the mandates of his father, continued in arms, and commanding his unhappy brother to be murdered under the walls of Asir (Burhanpur), immediately assumed the imperial titles.

Nur Jahan had long suspected the intentions of Khurram. In spite of the veil which he had thrown over his base designs, they did not escape her penetration. Ambition was the dominant feeling in the bosom of this crafty prince. The Empress, seeing the evils likely to accrue from this fierce passion if suffered to operate unchecked, determined to take precautions to contravene his measures. Before the death of Khusru she saw that the unnatural brother, into whose power he had fallen, had a design upon the throne. Every action of his public life had shown a secret but undeviating perseverance in the pursuit of dominion, not to be mistaken. His cunning she felt might be overreached, but his talents were formidable. He was not only a crafty intriguer, but a brave and successful general. He had become the idol of the army; and with such a mighty engine to power, she dreaded the final success of his schemes. She declared her suspicions to the Emperor, who was at first unwilling to entertain them; but the wife had such an influence over the mind of her royal husband, that he always listened with great confidence to her suggestions. She assured him that Khurram must be watched, advised his recall, and that the army should be placed under a less dangerous command. She insisted upon speedy and decisive measures, in order to obviate danger to the state. To the Emperor's doubts of Khurram's ambitious intentions she answered: "A man does not seek the instruments of authority but to employ them. When princes lay them-

selves out for popularity they intend to make the mob their tools, and the citizens their stepping-stones to dominion. He who has once deceived is never to be trusted; and I can too well discover that, under the smiles of allegiance which so frequently play upon the features of Prince Khurram in his father's presence, hypocrisy lurks like the serpent in a bed of flowers."

After a while Jahangir was convinced by the arguments of the Sultana of his son's evil designs, which an account of Khusru's death soon confirmed. He was enraged at such a sanguinary act of ambition, and determined to punish the fratricide. In order to obviate the stigma which he knew would be attached to the crime of murdering a brother, the crafty prince affected such extreme grief that he was believed by many to be innocent of so atrocious an offence. Jahangir, however, or rather his Empress, was not to be deceived by this barefaced hypocrisy: the former wrote him a letter accusing him of the crime; at the same time ordering the body of his murdered son to be disinterred; it was brought to the capital and buried with the honours due to his rank.

Although Prince Khurram was married to a niece of Nur Jahan the hostility between him and the Empress had risen to such a height that it was perfectly implacable. The rebellious prince well knew that he owed the indignation of his parent to her influence; he therefore resolved to lose no time in endeavouring to get her into his power. Seeing no probability of a reconciliation with his father he determined to continue in his rebellion.

At the suggestion of his consort, Jahangir prepared to reduce his son to obedience; but his troops being at a distance, he could not bring an army into the field. At this critical juncture, a courier arrived from Mahabat Khan, the imperial general, stating that he was advancing with all the forces of the Punjab, to join the royal army. Shortly after, the troops of Jahangir engaged the rebels and entirely defeated them. The refractory prince

was so overcome by this unexpected reverse of fortune, that he meditated suicide. The paroxysm, however, passed, and he fled to the mountains of Mewat, where he found for the moment a secure refuge from the anger of his father and the hostility of Nur Jahan. Misfortune followed him: his party was defeated in Guzerat. Still the royal rebel was so formidable, that it was resolved to take him alive, as the only means of extinguishing the flames of civil war, always disastrous to the victors as well as to the vanquished. Mahabat Khan was therefore despatched, at the head of a large detachment of Rajputs, a race of soldiers proverbially brave, to capture the royal insurgent. Khurram, in consequence, quitted his retreat, determined to face the danger and try the chance of another battle. Crossing the river Narbada, in the province of Malwa, he threw up works to defend the ford. Of the large and well-appointed army which had followed him into the Dekhan there remained only a small dispirited remnant, and desertions were daily thinning his lines. He had no reliance upon the soldiers, dejected from successive defeats, and murmuring for their arrears of pay, which he was unable to provide. He lost his energy, became incautious and irresolute, and allowed himself to be surprised by the imperial general, who routed his disheartened forces with great slaughter, and forced him again to seek refuge in the hills. He soon, however, passed through Golconda, and took the route to Bengal.

His escape was a source of severe mortification to the Sultana, who foresaw that the repose of the state was not likely to be secured until he should either be taken or destroyed. She was besides anxious that the succession should be fixed upon Shahryar, the fourth son of Jahangir, who had married the daughter whom she had borne to Sher Afgan. By her representations, no doubt in the main just, the Emperor's enmity towards his son was kept alive; of which the latter being aware, saw that it would not be prudent to trust himself within the walls of his



ASAF KHAN, BROTHER OF NUR JEHAN
From "Miniature Painting of Persia, India and Turkey"
by F. R. Martin

father's capital. He had more than once thought of throwing himself upon the paternal clemency; but his knowledge of Nur Jahan's vindictive spirit, and the consciousness of his own manifold derelictions, kept him from running the risk of captivity for life, if not of undergoing extreme punishment.

His affairs, however, now began to assume a more favourable aspect. Having invested the fort of Talitgarh, in Bengal, with a new army which he had raised in that province, after an obstinate defence by the garrison, he succeeded in carrying the place by storm. This unexpected success animated him to new exertions. He now overran the whole district, which shortly submitted to his arms. He reduced Dacca, a considerable city, and once the capital of Bengal, in which he found an immense treasure of gold and silver, besides jewels and warlike stores. The Subhadar was deposed, and a new governor raised, who ruled in the name of Shah Jahan, by which title Prince Khurram finally ascended the imperial throne.

No sooner had he settled the government of Bengal, than he turned his thoughts to the neighbouring province of Bihar. The governor fled at his approach; but the wealthy zemindars crowded to his camp to offer him their allegiance. He accepted their submission, together with the rich presents which they brought to ratify the mutual compact of protection and affiance, and to confirm their sincerity. But the most important occurrence, and which greatly tended to strengthen him in his new conquests, was the unexpected submission of Mubarak, the governor of the fort of Rhotas, who came to his camp, presented him the keys, and made a vow of perpetual fealty. This fortress was considered impregnable. It had never been taken by force, and was therefore looked upon by the rebellious prince as a place of security for his family. Here he immediately removed them; and being now relieved from immediate anxiety on their account, he was better

prepared to encounter the dangers of the field, and to brave the vicissitudes of fortune.

This uninterrupted current of success inflamed the pride of the royal rebel, and he fancied himself in a condition to contend for the imperial sceptre with that army which had already twice so signally defeated him. Mahabat Khan had again taken the field, and marched as far as Banaras, on the banks of the Ganges, to chastise the insurgents, who mustered upwards of forty thousand horse—a force scarcely inferior to the imperialists in number—and were drawn up on the bank of a small stream.

The battle was desperate, but decisive. The rebels were routed after a prodigious slaughter. The conduct of Prince Khurram on this occasion was marked by reckless bravery. Plunging into the thickest of the fight with five hundred horse, who had resolved to devote themselves to death with their leader, he maintained a sanguinary struggle against immense odds, and would, no doubt, have fallen a victim to his despair, had not some of his officers seized the reins of his charger, and forced him from the battle to a place of security. He fled to the fort of Rhotas, where he had left his family. The plunder of his camp, which contained the spoils of Dacca, saved him from immediate pursuit.

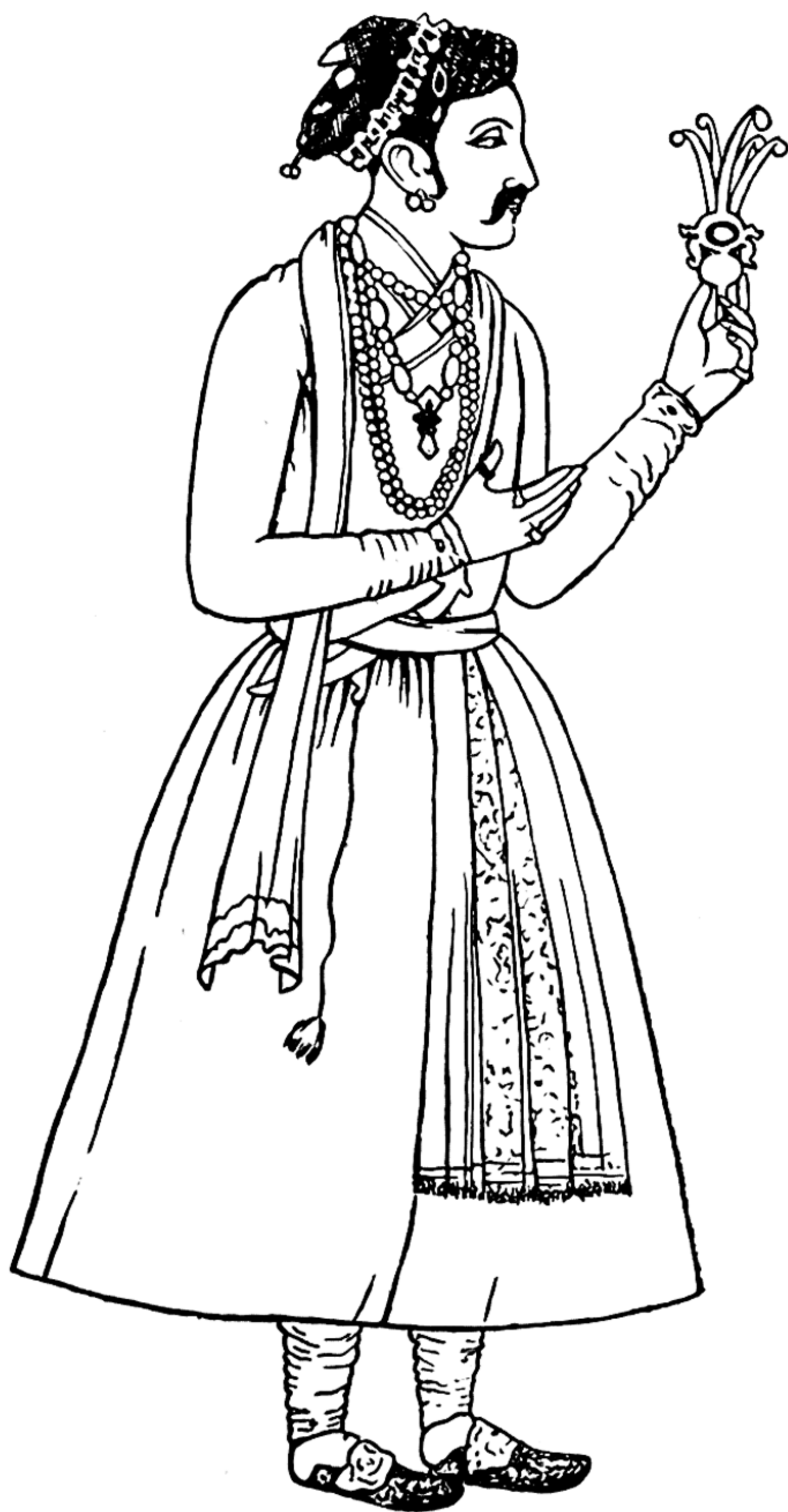
Leaving his family in the fortress, where he imagined they would be secure, the wretched prince collected the scattered remains of his army, and threw himself into Patna, which he determined to defend, but thought it prudent to evacuate the city at the approach of his enemies. He fled through Bengal towards the Dekhan. The provinces which he had so lately conquered fell again under the legitimate authority. When Mahabat had settled the government of these districts, he marched after the royal fugitive.

Though his fortunes were reduced to so low an ebb, the prince did not despond. His mind was active, and

these severe reverses only seemed to animate him to new enterprises. He attached to his desperate fortunes Malik Amber, the able Prime minister of Nizam Shah, who entertained some cause of enmity towards Jahangir. Strengthened by the forces of this new ally, he reduced the city of Burhanpur; when the imperial army arriving, forced him to raise the siege and take shelter in the mountains of Ballaghat. In his retreat he made an attempt upon a strong fortress on the frontiers of Khandesh, where he was repulsed with considerable loss.

This completed his ruin. His nobles no longer followed him; and the troops, under the sanction of their example, deserted his standard. A thousand horse only remained. His spirits sank within him; his misfortunes oppressed him, his guilt and folly were always present to his mind. Sickness was added to his other miseries. He was hunted like a wild beast from place to place; all mankind were his enemies—he was their foe. Where he thought he could not overcome, he fled: he spread devastation through places where he could prevail. He was, however, tired of rapine. Worn down by contention and hostility, he wrote letters of compunction to his father; he enlarged on his own guilt, he even added if possible, to his own wretchedness and misfortune. Jahangir was often full of affection—he was always weak; and he was shocked at the miserable condition of a son whom he had once loved; his tears fell upon the part of that son's letter which mentioned guilt, and his crimes vanished from memory.

“In the midst of this returning softness, Jahangir was not altogether void of policy. He wrote to his son, that if he would give orders to the governors of Rhotas, of Ashirgarh, and other places which were still held out in his name, to deliver up their forts, and send his three sons, Dara, Aurangzeb, and Murad, to court, he would be forgiven for his past crimes. Khurram embraced the offer with joy; he delivered up the forts and sent his



SHAH JEHAN

From a Moghul painting in the collection of the Victoria and
Albert Museum, London

children to Agra. He, however, found various pretences for not appearing in person at court. He alleged that he was ashamed to see a father whom he had so much injured; but he was actually afraid of the machinations of the Sultana. He made excursions, under a pretence of pleasure, through all parts of the empire, attended by five hundred horse. He was sometimes heard of at Ajmir, sometimes at Tatta on the Indus, and again the Dekhan. Such was the termination of this formidable rebellion, the suppression of which Jahangir entirely owed to the vigilance and foresight of his Empress, Nur Jahan. This remarkable woman was ever conspicuous amid the great stir of the times; and in every action of her life she displayed that predominancy of mind which had distinguished her even before her exaltation to the imperial sceptre, which she may be said to have wielded,—for though it appeared in the hand of her husband, she gave strength to the grasp by which he held it, and imparted stability to his throne.

CHAPTER VII

AMONG the extraordinary occurrences of Nur Jahan's life, perhaps, there is none that more forcibly develops her character than her bearing towards Mahabat Khan, after the signal services which he had rendered the state by suppressing the rebellion of Prince Khurram. The eminent abilities displayed by Mahabat during his command of the imperial armies had won for him the confidence of his master and of the empress; and this

confidence was increased by his suppression of the most formidable rebellion which disturbed the reign of Jahangir. His family was raised to offices of trust in the state, and the Emperor treated him with a distinction that excited the envy of the nobles. But the gratitude of princes has ever been a questionable virtue; their suspicions are readily excited, and there are never wanting engines to set those suspicions at work.

Nur Jahan soon became apprehensive of Mahabat's influence with the Emperor; and therefore, to abridge it, put in operation the active energies of her mind. Jahangir was naturally a credulous man, and the rebellion of his son had rendered him suspicious. The virtues of his general ought to have placed him above the petty surmises suggested by envy; but his abilities had raised enemies at court, and his master wanted firmness to repel the insinuations levelled against the man who had been the main prop of his throne. Mahabat soon perceived a change in his sovereign's feelings; but, conscious of his own integrity, he was at no pains to remove the prejudices excited against him. He was conscious that he owed much of the growing coldness evident in the Emperor's manner towards him to the misrepresentations of Nur Jahan; and thence grew a strong and mutual antipathy which had nearly proved the means of transferring the empire from the house of Timur to another dynasty.

The immediate cause of that open rupture which ensued and had nearly cost Jahangir his crown, was an accusation made to the Sultana by a noble that Mahabat had sanctioned his son's death, which the father expressed himself determined to avenge. He further stated that the general entertained a design of raising his sovereign's second son to the throne. This was reported to the Emperor; it immediately excited his fear, and he listened with weak credulity to a charge of treason against his general. Blinded by his terrors, he forgot the services

which that great and good man had rendered to the state, and weakly listened to the voice of his slanderers.

Mahabat, who was at this time in Bengal, received his master's imperative orders to repair immediately to the capital. As he did not instantly obey, he received a second summons, still more peremptory, accompanied with such manifestations of displeasure, that he could no longer mistake the danger of his situation. Although surprised at this total change of good feeling towards him, yet having really done nothing justly to excite his sovereign's displeasure, he resolved to obey the mandate at all hazards, but to take every necessary precaution against his enemies, whether secret or open. When, however, he reflected upon the unworthy requital he had received for his services, indignation and disgust overbore his first resolution, and he came to the determination of retiring to a castle of which he had some time before been appointed governor; but, to his astonishment, he found that an order had been received at the fortress to deliver it up to a person whom Nur Jahan had appointed to take immediate possession. This unjustifiable act of tyranny convinced him of what some of his friends at court had already apprised him, that his life was in danger from the secret machinations of his foes; he determined therefore not to put himself in their power before he had at least made some effort to ascertain the extent of his peril.

He wrote to the Emperor, expressing surprise at his hostility towards an unoffending subject, and declaring that, though he had the greatest confidence in the honour of his sovereign, he had none in that of his evil counsellors. The only reply which he received to this temperate expostulation was an order, still more peremptory than those already sent, to appear at court without further delay. To refuse was to rebel; he therefore addressed another letter to his imperial master. In it he said, "I will serve my sovereign with my life against his

enemies; but I will not expose it to the malice of his friends. Assure me of safety and I will clear myself in your presence."

This letter was construed by the Sultana, who directed all the Emperor's measures, into an indignity. Jahangir was angry, and despatched a messenger, summoning Mahabat, in very reproachful terms, to appear before him. The general prepared to obey; but took the precaution of going with an escort of five thousand Rajputs in the imperial pay, who had long served under him; and were devoted to their commander. With this guard of faithful soldiers he proceeded towards Lahore, where the sovereign at that time held his court

When the Empress heard that Mahabat was advancing with so numerous an escort, she became alarmed. She feared that such a formidable force might either terrify the Emperor into a reconciliation, or place his crown in jeopardy. Either way there was cause for apprehension. She persuaded him, therefore, not to admit the refractory general into the camp, for at his time the imperial retinue was on its way from Lahore to Kabul. When he arrived near the royal encampment, a messenger was despatched to inform him that he would not be allowed to enter the presence of his sovereign until he had accounted for the revenues of Bengal, and the plunder taken at the battle of Banaras. Provoked at such a demand, the general despatched his son-in-law to complain of the indignity; but no sooner had the young man entered the Emperor's presence, than he was stripped, bastinadoed, covered with a ragged robe, placed upon a lean tattoo with his face towards the tail, and thus sent back to his father-in-law amid the jeers of the whole army. This was an insult not to be forgiven. Mahabat was grieved at the Emperor's weakness, but attributed the scandal of the late scene to Nur Jahan, to whose intrigues he imputed her royal husband's violent hostility. He saw that to put himself in her power was at once to relinquish his liberty, if

not his life; and he accordingly formed his resolution. It was no less decisive than bold. He resolved immediately to surprise the sovereign and carry him off.

The imperial army lay encamped on the banks of a river, across which was a bridge. On the morning after the maltreatment of Mahabat's messenger, they proceeded on their march. Not being in an enemy's country, no precautions were used against surprise, as no danger was apprehended. The army commenced its march early in the morning; and Jahangir, being in no haste to move, continued in his tent, intending to follow at his convenience. When the imperial troops had crossed the bridge, Mahabat advancing with his Rajputs, set it on fire, and thus cut off the sovereign's retreat. He then rushed forward to the royal tent. His face was pale, but his whole aspect severe and resolute; there was no mistaking the purpose which was legibly written in every feature. He was followed by his brave Rajputs. Resistance was vain. The guards and nobles were instantly disarmed.

Jahangir had retired to the bath, whither Mahabat followed him. The guards attempted to oppose the latter's entrance; but putting his hand upon his sword, and pointing to his numerous followers, no further opposition was made, and the bold general entered the bathing-tent. The courtiers present, seeing the folly of resistance, relinquished their arms and became silent spectators of the scene. Mahabat passed them with a stern countenance, which brought to their memories the outrage of the preceding day, but did not utter a word.

Meanwhile information of what had happened was carried to the inner tent, where the Emperor was, by some of the female attendants. He seized his sword, but was soon brought to a sense of his defenceless position. Perceiving that all his guards and nobles were disarmed, and that Mahabat was accompanied by a band of resolute followers prepared to obey his commands to the very letter, he approached the general, whom his conscience

now told him he had treated with signal ingratitude, and said, "What does this mean, Mahabat Khan?" Mahabat, touching the ground, and then his forehead, thus replied:

"Forced by the machinations of my enemies, who plot against my life, I throw myself under the protection of my sovereign."

"You are safe," answered the Emperor, "but what would those who stand armed behind you?"

"They demand full security," rejoined Mahabat, "for me and my family; and without it they will not retire."

"I understand you," said Jahangir, "name your terms, and they shall be granted. But you do me an injustice, Mahabat: I did not plot against your life; I knew your services, though I was offended at your seeming disobedience of my commands. Be assured of my protection; I shall forget the conduct which necessity has imposed upon you."

Mahabat did not reply, but ordering a horse, requested the Emperor to mount. They then rode forward, surrounded by Rajputs. When they had proceeded beyond the skirts of the camp, the imperial captive was respectfully requested to place himself upon an elephant, in order to avoid accident in any confusion that might ensue from his departure. He readily complied with the general's request, seeing that opposition would be fruitless, and ascended the elephant, upon which three Rajuts immediately placed themselves as guards. Some of the nobles, seeing the captivity of their sovereign, advanced to oppose his progress, and were instantly cut down by the followers of Mahabat. There was no further interruption offered, and Jahangir was taken to Mahabat's tent. Here the latter explained himself to his royal prisoner assuring him that he had no design either against his life or his power. "But," he continued, sternly, "I am determined to be secure from treachery."

Mahabat was greatly disappointed that he had not

been able to secure Nur Jahan. During the confusion caused by the entrance of his numerous followers into the imperial tent, she had contrived to escape, and passing the stream upon her elephant, had joined the army to whom she communicated the disaster of her husband's captivity.

Mahabat, not considering himself secure while the Sultana was at large, determined to leave nothing unattempted to get her into his power. He had now publicly shown his hostility; the banner of rebellion was raised, and no alternative remained but to pursue his purpose with the same resolute boldness with which he had begun it. He was conscious of the resources of his own genius. He was the idol of the troops which he commanded; and though aware of the consummate abilities of the Sultana—who in fact directed the movements of the imperial army—and of her brother the Prime Minister (Wazir), still he knew they were not popular with the troops, and that, moreover, a great number of the noblemen were dissatisfied with the influence exercised by her and her family.

Mahabat having returned with the Emperor to his former camp on the banks of the river, found that Sujait Khan, a nobleman of high reputation, had just arrived to join the imperial army. Finding the camp deserted, and the Emperor a prisoner in the hands of his rebellious general, Sujait upbraided the latter with treachery in the presence of his Rajputs. The general, at once enraged and alarmed, ordered his troops to fall upon the haughty noble, whom they immediately slew, together with his whole retinue. This decisive stroke of severity at once terrified the other nobles who had been watching for an opportunity of rescuing their sovereign, and they fled across the river, carrying to the imperial army the melancholy intelligence of Sujait's death.

This information produced a general gloom. The captivity of the Emperor excited the indignation of the



JAHANGIR

From a contemporary miniature in the collection of the Royal Asiatic Society, London

Sultana, and of Asaf the Prime Minister. Nur Jahan summoned the nobles who had just joined the army, and upbraided them with their cowardice in not hazarding their lives in defence of their royal master. A council was promptly summoned, and a consultation held as to the best method to be pursued for rescuing the sovereign out

of his enemy's hands. There was no time to be lost; the moment was critical; delay only diminished the chance of success, as it strengthened the power of the rebel, who was universally popular. It was determined to recross the river with the dawn, and attack Mahabat. Jahangir whom they had contrived to apprise of this intention, began to fear for his life. He instantly sent a messenger to the Prime Minister to desist; but that minister not considering himself bound to comply with the commands of a captive monarch, determined to persevere in his intention.

CHAPTER VIII

AT daybreak the Prime Minister retraced his steps with the army. Upon reaching the bridge, finding that it had been burned down, he instantly came to the determination of fording the river; but the water was very deep, and in this attempt many were drowned. The banks on the opposite side were so steep, that those who gained them had to contend with an enemy under great disadvantage. The enemy too, were vigilant and active and cut them off as fast as they quitted the water. Nothing could withstand the headlong valour of the Rajputs. Not a man escaped; the moment he gained the bank, he was slain in attempting to ascend it. The imperial army, however, was numerous, and the rear pressing upon the front, many at length made good their footing; but it was to encounter foes whose principle of warfare was to vanquish or to die. The action continued for several hours, and the slaughter

of the imperial forces was prodigious. The Premier did all in his power to encourage the troops, to no purpose—they were dispirited; but still, trusting to their numbers, they continue the struggle under the greatest disadvantages.

Nur Jahan witnessed the whole scene from the river-bank, and her alarm was excessive at beholding the slaughter of the royal forces. Her resolute spirit was roused, and her determination instantly taken. Mounted upon an elephant,—on which was likewise her daughter, a beautiful maiden, in the prime and freshness of youth—armed with a bow and arrow she plunged fearlessly into the stream. The Empress was followed by several nobles, who, ashamed at beholding the resolution of a woman, followed her into the river, and made for the further side. Urging her elephant to the middle of the channel, she waved a scarf to encourage the Premier's troops. Undaunted at the carnage before she stood in the howdah, and discharged her arrows with fatal aim at the foe. Three mahuts were successively killed; yet she maintained her position, and having exhausted her quiver, demanded another to be brought. Her elephant was three times wounded, and her situation became extremely dangerous from the violent plunges of the animal under the excitement of suffering. Still she continued to discharge her arrows with fearless determination. Her daughter was at length wounded in the arm, which only stimulated the heroic mother to greater exertions. She urged her elephant forward to the bank, soon exhausted another quiver of arrows, and called for a fresh supply. The sight of her heroism gave an impulse to the wavering courage of her brother's troops, and many effected their landing.

The battle now became sanguinary in the extreme; but the imperialist gained no ground. In spite of Nur Jahan's presence, they could not overcome the determined resistance of the Rajputs; nevertheless, they fought with

a bravery worthy of better success. Nur Jahan, having urged her elephant close to the bank, a Rajput gave it a severe wound with his sword, just at the root of the trunk. With a shrill cry the huge animal fell; but whilst it was in the act of falling, Nur Jahan had placed an arrow in the string of her bow, and fixed it in the brain of her foe, who rolled dead upon the plain. When the elephant fell, both mother and daughter were thrown into the stream, and, as the current was rapid, their lives were in jeopardy; but the Empress, seizing her bow with her teeth, swam towards some noblemen, who were crossing to second her heroic exertions. Her daughter was delivered from peril by the enemy and made prisoner. Meanwhile, the mother breasted the current, and with difficulty reached an elephant, upon which a noble was seated, who rescued her from the river. Whilst she was in the water a ball from a matchlock struck her in the side; but it passed round by the rib, and thus did not enter her body.

Undismayed by the danger she had just escaped, the Empress continued to discharge her arrows at the enemy, doing considerable execution with her single arm. Mahabat was the chief object of her aim; but he was too far from the bank to enable her to accomplish her fatal purpose. Her danger was becoming every moment more imminent; she nevertheless urged her elephant forward, reckless of personal consequences. She had already exhausted three quivers of arrows, when a fourth was brought to her. At the first discharge she struck a soldier in the body, who instantly tore out the shaft from his flesh, and with a fierce resolution of revenge leaped into the stream. He held his sword above the water with one hand, and dashed with the other towards the Sultana's elephant. Already was his arm raised to strike; but before he could accomplished his purpose, another arrow from the heroine's bow was burred in his breast, and he sank beneath the whirling eddies.

A number of Rajputs now rushed into the river to seize Nur Jahan. They soon surrounded her; but she plied her bow so vigorously that several of them were wounded. They were, however, about to make good their capture—the glory of the Moghuls was in jeopardy. A Rajput had ascended the back of her elephant, and commenced a fierce struggle with the nobleman who accompanied his Empress. At this moment, the huge animal having received a severe wound behind, sprang suddenly forward, making its way through the soldiers by whom it had been surrounded, and scrambled up the bank. It was immediately despatched. As it fell, Nur Jahan leaped from the howdah, and with a voice of stern command summoned some of the imperial troops, who were engaged in a desperate conflict with the enemy, to her rescue. They obeyed a voice which they had long been taught to consider as that of their sovereign. She was soon surrounded by friends and foes. Seizing a sword she fought with a heroism that astonished even the Rajputs, with whom valour is a heritage. A deep sabre-cut in the shoulder seemed only to add a stimulus to her resolution. The man who had inflicted the wound received from her arm a signal retribution: she dashed her sword into his skull, and he was instantly prostrated among the dead.

The battle now raged with prodigious fury; but the imperialists were fast giving way. At length the Sultana was left fighting with unabated energy, supported by only a few soldiers. The moment was critical. Two Rajputs advanced to seize her; she saw there was not an instant to be lost, and rushing to the river's bank, turned her head upon her foes with a haughty expression of defiance, and leaped undauntedly into the torrent. The two soldiers followed, resolved to make her their prisoner or die in the attempt. In spite of her wound, with a resolution which nothing could subdue, she bore up against the rapid current; but notwithstanding all her exertions, was carried by its force down the stream. As the

soldiers were more encumbered, the body of each being protected by a thick quilted tunic, the royal fugitive gained considerably upon them. That portion of the imperial army which had not yet crossed the river, watched her with intense anxiety. She rose buoyantly above the waters and after great exertions, landed upon the opposite bank. Her pursuers were, by this time, close upon her. Determined not to be made a prisoner, she prepared for a desperate resistance.

One of the Rajputs being before the other, first gained the shore. The bank was steep; just as he reached the brink, his foot slipped, and he partially fell, but clung to the roots of some wild shrubs that protruded from the earth. The opportunity was not to be lost: Nur Jahan drew a dagger from her girdle, and as the soldier was struggling to regain his footing struck him with all her force upon the temple—his body being protected by the quilted tunic, his face was the only part that she could successfully strike. The blow was dealt with fatal aim: it divided the temporal artery, and the man fell back into the water, deluged in his blood. His companion, who had been carried farther down the stream, gained the bank during this fatal struggle. Overcome by the extraordinary heroism of the Empress, he approached her with a profound salaam, and said, "Lady, your heroic bearing deserves a better meed than captivity. You are now within my power; but, astonished at the matchless valour you have displayed, I cannot persuade myself to make you prisoner. Promise me a safe conduct back to the army to which I belong, and you are free; refuse me, and I will plunge immediately with you into the stream, where we will both perish together."

"Soldier," replied the Sultana with composed dignity, "I accept your terms. I promise you a safe conduct to your friends. Your behaviour is noble, and claims my esteem: what boon can I offer you?"

"A Rajput never accepts a boon from a foe. Besides,

I have no claim upon your generosity. I do not spare you because you are Empress of the Moghuls, but because I admire the valour which you have exhibited as a woman. With women it is a rare quality, and deserves its reward, I should have felt the same towards a Parish who had displayed as much."

Nur Jahan was received by her friends with shouts of joy; and the soldier who accompanied her was conducted to a ford some distance up the river, where he passed over to the army of Mahabat.

Seeing their Empress safe, two noblemen, with their followers, crossed the stream and joined the imperialists, who were now giving way on all sides. Encouraged by this fresh accession of force, the retreating party again rallied, and the contest was maintained with renewed vigour. The Rajputs were in their turn repulsed. They retreated towards the tent in which the Emperor was confined. Several arrows and balls piercing through the canvas and exposing Jahangir's life to great danger, he was covered with a shield by an officer of the guard. Meanwhile Mahabat rallied his troops behind the tents and turned them upon the flank of the imperialists, who, dispirited by this fresh assault, gave way, and a general rout followed. Mahabat, after a hard contest remained master of the field, which was literally covered with the slain.

The Prime Minister, seeing that all was lost, fled from the scene of carnage and reaching the castle of New Rhotas, shut himself up there with five hundred men. The castle was strong, but offered a retreat of very equivocal security against an army flushed with recent conquest, and commanded by the greatest general of his time. Nur Jahan escaped to Lahore; yet her safety was anything but certain, being without troops, and all the bravest noblemen of the imperial army either slain or in captivity. Nevertheless she bore her reverse with that

indomitable resolution so natural to her lofty and energetic spirit.

Mahabat despatched a messenger to the Premier with assurances of safety; but the latter declined putting himself in the power of a successful rebel; upon which the incensed general sent his son with a strong detachment to invest the fort of Rhotas. He almost immediately joined this officer with his whole army, and after a feeble resistance the Premier surrendered at discretion. He was, however, treated with great urbanity and kindness by the conqueror, which not only conciliated his good opinion, but won his friendship.

Meanwhile the Emperor forwarded a letter to his royal consort begging her to join him, speaking in high terms of the respectful treatment he received from Mahabat, and giving her assurance of a kind reception: urging her at the same time to forget past causes of animosity, and lay aside all thoughts of further hostility, that the empire might not be involved in the horrors of a civil war. He besought her to follow him to Kabul, whither he was then proceeding; declaring that there was no restraint put upon his actions, but that he was allowed to direct his march wherever he thought proper.

Nur Jahan, seeing at a glance the desperate condition of things, determined to comply at once with the Emperor's commands, being satisfied that there was more danger in resistance. She therefore came to the resolution of choosing the least of two evils, and, setting out from Lahore, joined her captive husband on his march towards Kabul. Mahabat sent a strong detachment to meet and pay her the honours due to her rank; but she was not to be deceived by so flimsy an artifice. It was evident to her that she was surrounded by her future guards; nevertheless she affected to receive the ostensible compliment, and met the Emperor with a cheerful countenance.

She was immediately subjected to a rigorous confine-

ment. Her tent was surrounded by troops, and she was not permitted to stir abroad. Mahabat accused her of treason against the state, and insisted that so dangerous a criminal should be instantly put to death. "You who are Emperor of the Moghuls," said he to Jahangir, "and whom we look upon as something more than human, ought to follow the example of God, who has no respect for persons."

CHAPTER IX

MAHABAT, feeling that his future safety depended upon the death of Nur Jahan, had sent a soldier to despatch her. The minister of destruction entered her tent after midnight, when she was plunged in profound repose. Her beautiful limbs were stretched upon a Persian carpet, the rich colours of which glowed in the light of a lamp that burned upon a silver frame near her bed. Her fine features were relaxed into that placid expression which sleep casts over the countenance when no disquieting dreams disturb and excite it into muscular activity. The slow and measured breath came from her lovely bosom like incense from a sacred censer. Her right arm, naked to the shoulder, and on which the scar of the wound she had lately received appeared still red and tender, was thrown across her bosom, showing an exquisite roundness of surface and delicacy of outline, that fixed the attention of the rugged soldier, who hesitated to remove so beautiful a barrier to that bosom which his dagger was commissioned to reach. He stood over his victim in mute astonishment. He was entranced by her beauty. The recollection of her undaunted heroism

disarmed his purpose, and he dropped the weapon of death. Nur Jahan was roused by the noise;—she started from her slumber. Seeing a man in the tent, she sprang from her couch, and, eyeing him with calm disdain, said:

“I apprehend your purpose; you are a murderer;—Nur Jahan is not unprepared to die even by the assassin’s dagger. Strike,” she said sternly, and bared her bosom.

The man was overcome; he prostrated himself before her, pointed to the fallen weapon, and besought her to forgive the evil purpose with which he had entered her tent:

“I am but an humble instrument of another’s will.”

“Go,” replied Nur Jahan with dignity, “and tell your employer that your mistress and his knows how to meet death when it comes but claims from him the justice awarded to the meanest criminal. The secret dagger is the instrument of tyranny, not of justice. I am in his power; but let him exercise that power as becomes a brave and a good man.”

Mahabat was not surprised, though greatly mortified, when he found that his purpose had been thus defeated. He therefore sought the Emperor, and insisted that he should immediately sign a warrant for the death of Nur Jahan. Jahangir knew too well the justice of the demand, the wrongs she had heaped upon the man who made it, and his own incapability of resistance, to disobey. Not having seen the Empress for some time, he had in a degree forgotten the influence of her charm; and prepared though with reluctance, to comply with the sanguinary requisition. When the awful announcement was made to Nur Jahan, she did not exhibit the slightest emotion. “Imprisoned sovereigns,” she said, “lose their right of life with their freedom; but permit me once more to see the Emperor, and to bathe with my tears the hand that has fixed the seal to the warrant of my death. She was well aware of the influence she still possessed over the uxorious Emperor; and, her request being complied with, she

attired herself in a plain white dress, with the simplest drapery, which showed her still lovely figure to the greatest advantage, and was thus brought before Jahangir in the presence of Mahabat. There was an expression of subdued sorrow upon her countenance, which seemed only to enhance the lustre of her beauty. She advanced with a stately step but did not utter a word; and, bending before her royal husband took his hand and pressed it to her bosom with a silent but solemn appeal; Jahangir was deeply moved. He burst into tears, and raising the object of his long and ardent attachment, turned to Mahabat, and said in a tone of tremulous earnestness. "Will you not spare this woman?" Mahabat, subdued by the scene, and feeling for his sovereign's distress, replied: "The Emperor of the Moghuls should never ask in vain."

Waving his hand to the guards, they instantly retired, and the Sultana was restored to liberty. She, however, forgot the wrong, and determined to avenge it. She manifested no signs of hostility, but always met the general with a cheerful countenance and a courteous air, by which she completely lulled his suspicions. Secure in the general estimation of the troops, and especially of his faithful Rajputs, he felt no fears for his own personal safety; and having completely won the good opinion of Jahangir by his late act of generous forbearance towards Nur Jahan, he had little apprehension from the intrigues of the latter, however she might choose to employ them. He however knew not the person of whom he judged so lightly. Her aims were not to be defeated but by the loss of liberty. She never lost sight of her purpose save in its accomplishment. Nothing could reconcile her to the degradation which she had been lately made to endure. Her daughter indeed had been restored to her; but she likewise had been deprived of freedom, and treated with the indignity of a prisoner. The wound of the latter, which was slight, had soon healed; yet the mother felt

that she had received a double wrong in the captivity of herself and child. She employed her time in devising schemes of vengeance; but for six months she plotted so secretly, that not the least suspicion was excited in the mind of Mahabat. Jahangir treated him with the open confidence of friendship, and Nur Jahan appeared to meet him at all times with amicable cordiality. This however was only the treacherous calm which often heralds a tempest.

One morning, when the general, accompanied by a considerable retinue, went to pay his customary respects to the Emperor, he was attacked at the same moment from both ends of a narrow street. He was fired at from the windows of several houses. Great confusion ensued; but Mahabat's followers being well armed, he put himself at their head and cut his way through the assailants. His escape was a miracle; the whole of his retinue were either wounded or slain, yet he was unhurt. The plot had been so well concerted, that not a single creature was prepared for it but those persons to whom it had been communicated. The spirit of disaffection soon spread. The guards who surrounded the Emperor were attacked by the citizens; and all, to the number of five hundred, put to the sword. The whole city of Kabul was in an uproar and had not Mahabat fled to his camp, which was pitched without the walls, he would have fallen a sacrifice to their fury. Enraged at their perfidy, he prepared to take a speedy and ample revenge. Nur Jahan, perceiving the failure of her scheme, was aware that she was in a situation of extreme peril. The citizens, terrified at the preparations which the incensed general was making to punish their perfidy, sent some of the principal inhabitants to him, supplicating his forbearance; declaring that the tumult originated with the rabble, and offering to give up the ringleaders to his just indignation. Although Mahabat suspected that Nur Jahan had been the principal instrument of the attack upon his life and the massacre

of his guards, he dissembled his resentment, and accepted the offers of submission, but made a vow never again to enter Kabul. Having punished the ringleaders, he quitted the neighbourhood on the following morning taking the Emperor with him.

On their way to Lahore, Mahabat suddenly resolved to resign his power, and to place Jahangir again at liberty. The resolution was as inexplicable as it was sudden and unexpected. He had no wish for empire. Having punished his enemies and vindicated his own wrongs, he exacted from Jahangir oblivion of the past; then disbanding his army, and retaining only a small retinue, he left his sovereign to his entire freedom. Nur Jahan, not in the least moved by this act of generosity on the part of a man whom her own intrigues had forced into rebellion, resolved now to seize the opportunity of consummating her revenge. She could not forget the indignities she had endured at the hands of Mahabat; that he had once attempted her life, obliged the Emperor to sign her death-warrant, and held her in odious captivity. She demanded that her royal consort should immediately order his execution.

"A man," said she, "so daring as to seize the person of his sovereign is a dangerous subject. The lustre of royalty must be diminished in the eyes of the people, while he who has dragged his prince from the throne is permitted to kneel before it with feigned allegiance."

Jahangir, remembering the provocations which Mahabat had received, and his temperate use of power, was shocked at the Sultana's vindictiveness, and commanded her, in a severe tone, to be silent.

Although she made no reply, she did not relinquish her design. Shortly afterwards, an attempt being made upon the general's life, he found it necessary to quit the camp secretly. The emissaries of the Empress were sent to capture him, but he effected his scape. He who had so lately had a victorious army at his command

was now a fugitive, without a follower, and obliged to fly for his life. He had left all his wealth behind him, which was seized by the implacable Nur Jahan; and she issued a proclamation through all the provinces of the empire, denouncing him as a rebel, commanded him to be seized and set a price upon his head. This violence on the part of the Sultana was disapproved both by the Emperor and the Prime Minister, the latter of whom did not forget the courtesy shown to him by the fugitive after the defeat of the imperial army, when he was made prisoner by that very man who was now pursued with hostility by a vindictive enemy who owed to him her life and liberty.

Asiph, Nur Jahan's brother, was not insensible to the merit of Mahabat. He knew him to be the best general of his time, an ardent lover of his country, and that he had been forced into rebellion by acts of repeated and unjustifiable aggression. He felt assured that such was not a man to be cast off from the state without doing it an injury that could never be repaired. Besides, he feared the lengths to which the Nur Jahan's ambition might carry her, and considered it was high time it should be checked. Although Mahabat was a wanderer and a refugee under the denouncement of death, he bore up against his reverses with the same magnanimity which had actuated him when at the summit of his power.

The Premier noble having found means to assure him of his friendship Mahabat mounted his horse and rode four hundred miles without a single follower, to meet and confer with that high functionary; trusting to his bare and secret promise of protection. The minister was at that time encamped in the road between Lahore and Delhi. Mahabat entered the camp in a mean habit, late in the evening. Placing himself in the passage which led from the apartments of the Vizier to the harem, and telling the eunuch that he wished to see that minister the fugitive was immediately led into the latter's presence.

When Asaf saw the wretched condition of Mahabat, he fell upon his neck and wept. Retiring with him to a secret apartment, the general declared his determination, notwithstanding the low ebb of his fortunes, to raise Shah Jahan to the imperial throne. Asiph was overjoyed with this declaration, as that prince was allied to him by the double tie of friendship and family connection.

The result of this conference was a general declaration in favour of Jahangir's third son, who had already twice rebelled; but the Emperor dying a few months after, the state was freed from the probable effects of a civil war, and Prince Khurram ascended the imperial throne under the title of Shah Jahan. From that moment Nur Jahan retired from the world, devoting the rest of her days to study, and the quiet enjoyments of domestic life. As her power ceased with the death of Jahangir, her haughty spirit could not brook the public mortification of seeing herself holding a secondary rank in the empire. She never henceforward spoke upon state affairs, or allowed the subject to be mentioned in her presence. The singular beauty of her person continued almost to the last moment of her life; nor was the structure of her mind less remarkable. She was a woman of transcendent abilities; she rendered herself absolute in a government in which women were held to be both incapable and unworthy of holding the slightest share. It was not merely by the permissive weakness of Jahangir that she acquired such a political dominancy in the state; but the preeminent superiority of her own mental endowments, and the inferior mind and spirit of her royal husband shrank into comparative insignificance. She had as well the resolution to achieve as the intellect to project, and kept a mighty nation in awe by the extreme vigour of her administration. Though her passions were violent, her chastity was never impeached, and she lived an eminent pattern of conjugal fidelity. To her, the world is indebted for that delicious perfume so well-known by the

name of atar of roses, which she discovered during her retirement from public life. She died in the city of Lahore eighteen years after the death of Jahangir.

JAHANGIR: "WORLD-GRASPER"

By Stamley Lane-Poole

THE emperor Salim, entitled Jahangir, 'World-Grasper,' formed a striking contrast to his father, against whom he had more than once broken into open insurrection. Born under a superstitious spell, named after a wander-working saint, petted and spoilt, the boy grew up wilful, indolent, and self-indulgent, too lazy and indifferent to be either actively good or powerfully evil. He had instigated the murder of Akbar's trusted friend and minister, Abu-l-Fazl; he was possessed of a violent and arbitrary temper; and, like his wretched brothers Murad and Daniyal, he was a notorious and habitual drunkard, but unlike them he could control himself when necessary. His image may be seen depicted on his coins, wine-cup in hand, with unblushing effrontery: it is of a piece with the astonishingly simple candour of his own Memoirs. As he grew older he toned down somewhat, partly, he says, from conviction that he was injuring his health, but chiefly, no doubt, under the influence of his beautiful and talented wife Nur Jahan, the 'Light of the World.'

When he ascended the throne on 1605, at the age of thirty-seven, his character, never wanting in a certain indolent good-nature, had mellowed. He had become less savage and more sober; by day he was the picture of temperance, at night he became exceedingly 'glorious.' But what was done in the evening was entirely ignored in the morning, and any noble who ventured to approach the daily levees with the least odour of wine upon him was destined to certain and severe punishment. Jahangir carried his day-light sobriety so far as even to publish an edict against intemperance, and emulated his far more

contemptible 'brother' James of Great Britain by writing a Persian counterblast against tobacco. In spite of his vices, which his fine constitution supported with little apparent injury almost to his sixtieth year, he was no fool; he possessed a shrewd intelligence, and he showed his good sense in carrying on the system of government and principle of toleration inaugurated by Akbar. He was not deficient in energy when war was afoot; he was essentially just when his passions were not thwarted; and he cultivated religious toleration with the easy-going indifference which was the keynote of his character. The son of an eclectic philosopher and a Rajut princess, he professed himself a Muslim, restored the Mohammedan formulas of faith which Akbar had abandoned on the coinage, and revived the Hijra chronology, whilst preserving for regnal years and months the more convenient solar system. But he followed his father in his policy towards the Hindus, and was equally tolerant towards Christians.....

William Hawkins was the first to set on record a portrait of his 'talented drunkard,' and very curious it is...

The Two evidently suited each other well. Hawkins would have felt constrained in the presence of Akbar; but it was impossible to regard his son—at least of an evening—in any other light than as a jovial and somewhat tipsy boon-fellow. Hawkins for his part was a simple, honest sailor, a little inclined to bluster, but just the man to take the emperor in the right way, and not at all apt to be shocked at an extra allowance of grog.

He describes the emperor, as far from popular with his subjects, "who stand greatly in fear of him," and ascribes this partly to his preference for Mohammedans over Rajputs for posts of honour and command, and partly to his innate cruelty. Jahangir took pleasure in seeing men executed or torn to pieces by his elephants, and the dangerous sport of elephant fights was his favourite spectacle on five days in the week. He was

said to have killed his secretary with his own hand on mere suspicion, and flogged a man almost to death for breaking a dish. He delighted in combats between men and animals, and made an unarmed man fight with a lion till he was torn to shreds. At last the keepers contrived to tame fitten young lions, who played before the king, 'frisking between men's legs,' and with these animals as opponents the combats became comparatively bloodles. All this cruelty, added to a rapacious and severe government, produced disaffection among his subjects. Thieves and outlaws infested the roads, and many rebellions broke out.

The daily life of the emperor Jahangir was scarcely edifying. 'About the breake of day, he is at his Beades, with his face turned to the westward in a private faire room,' in which is 'the picture of Our Lady and Christ, graven in stone.' Then he shows himself to the people, who flock to bid him good-morrow. Two hours of sleep ensue, then dinner, after which the emperor retires to his women. At noon he again holds public levee till three, and witnesses the elephant fights and other sports. The nobles at Agra all come and pay him homage, and he hears all causes and complaints. He then says his prayers, and has a meal of four or five sorts of well-dressed meats, of which 'he eateth a bit to stay his stomach, drinking once of his stronge drinke. Then he cometh forth into a private room, where none can come but such as himself nominateth (for two years I was one of his attendants here). In this place he drinketh other five cupfuls, which is the portion that the Physicians alot him. This done he eateth opium, and then he ariseth, and being in the height of his drinke, he layeth him down to sleep. every man departing to his own home. And after he hath slept two houres they awake him, and bring his supper to him, at which time he is not able to feed himself; but it is thrust into his mouth by others, and this is about one of the clock; and then he sleepeth the rest of the night.'

JAHANGIR: EMPEROR OF HINDUSTHAN

By Mountstuart Elphinstone

Selim took possession of the government immediately on his father's death, and assumed the title of Jahangir (Conqueror of the World). He found the whole of his dominions on the north of the Narbada in a state of as great tranquillity as could be expected in so extensive an empire. The rebellion of Osman continued in Bengal, but was confined to part of that province. The contest with the Rana of Udaipur was a foreign war, and the success, though not complete, was on the side of the emperor. Affairs wore a worse aspect in the Deccan, where the Nizam Shahi government of Ahmednagar seemed to be recovering from the loss of its capital, and more likely to regain some of the territory it had been deprived of than to be completely subverted by the arms of the Moghuls.

Jahangir's first measures were of a much more benevolent and judicious character than might have been expected of him. He confirmed most of his father's old officers in their stations; and issued edicts, remitting some vexatious duties which had survived Akbar's reforms, forbidding the bales of merchants to be opened by persons in authority without their free consent, directing that no soldiers or servants of the state should quarter themselves on private houses, abolishing the punishments of cutting off ears and noses, and introducing other salutary regulations. Notwithstanding his own notorious habits, he strictly forbade the use of wine, and regulated that of opium; subjecting all offenders against his rules to severe punishment.

He restored the Mahomedan confession of faith on his coin, together with most of the forms of that religion. He, however, kept up some of Akbar's rules regarding abstinence from meat on particular days. He observed some of his superstitious devotions; he exacted the ceremony of prostration from all who approached him; and although, in his writings, he affects the devout style usual to all Mussulmans, he never acquired, and probably did not seriously pretend to, the character of a religious man. The general impression is, that though more superstitious, he was less devout, than Akbar, and had little feeling of religion even when abstracted from all peculiar tenets. Among his earliest measures was one for affording easy access to complaints, on which he valued himself at least as highly as the efficacy of the invention deserved: a chain was hung from a part of the wall of the citadel, accessible, without difficulty, to all descriptions of people; it communicated with a cluster of golden bells within the emperor's own apartment, and he was immediately apprised by the sound of the appearance of a suitor, and thus rendered independent of any officers inclined to keep back information.

The hatred which had so long subsisted between the new emperor and his eldest son was not likely to have been diminished by the events which preceded the accession. Khusru had ever since remained in a state of sullenness and dejection: and it is by no means probable that Jahangir's treatment of him was such as would be likely to soothe his feelings. His behaviour does not appear to have given rise to any suspicion, until upwards of four months after the accession; when Jahangir was awaked, at midnight, with the intelligence that his son had fled, with a few attendants, and taken the road to Delhi. He immediately despatched a light force in pursuit of him, and followed himself, in the morning, with all the troops he could collect.

Khusru was joined, soon after leaving Agra, by a body of 300 horse, whom he met on their march to the capital. He proceeded by Delhi, subsisting his troops by plunder, and by the time he reached the Panjab had collected a body of upwards of 10,000 men. The city of Lahore was betrayed to him, and he was making an ineffectual attempt to reduce the citadel when he was disturbed by the approach of his father's advanced guard. When this was announced to him, he drew his force out of Lahore, and attacked the royal troops, but, although he had the advantage of engaging a detachment, he was unable to offer a successful opposition. He was totally defeated, and, having fled in the direction of Kabul, he was run aground in a boat as he was passing the Hydaspes, and was seized and brought in chains before his father. The whole rebellion did not last above a month.

Khusru's principal advisers, and many of his common followers, fell into the hands of the emperor, and afforded him an opportunity of displaying all the ferocity of his character. He ordered 700 of the prisoners to be impaled in a line leading from the gate of Lahore; and he expatiates, in his *Memoirs*, on the long duration of their frightful agonies.¹ To complete his barbarity, he made his son Khusru be carried along the line on an elephant, while a mace-bearer called out to him, with mock solemnity, to receive the salutations of his servants.² The unhappy Khusru passed three days, in tears and groans, without tasting food;³ and remained for long after a prey to the deepest melancholy.

Prince Parviz, the emperor's second son, had been sent, under the guidance of Asaf Khan, against the Rana

1. *Price's Memoirs of Jehangir*, p. 88.

2. *Khafi Khan*.

3. *Memoirs of Jehangir*, p. 89. The general account of the rebellion is from *Jehangir's Memoirs*, *Khafi Khan* and *Gladwin*.

of Udaipur, very soon after the accession: he was recalled on the flight of Khusru, but in that short interval he had effected an accommodation with the Rana, and now joined his father's camp.

In the spring of the next year, Jahangir went to Kabul; and, when at that city, he showed some favour to Khusru, ordering his chains to be taken off, and allowing him to walk in a garden within the upper citadel. If he had any disposition to carry his forgiveness further, it was checked by a conspiracy, which was detected some time after, to release Khusru, and to assassinate the emperor.

On his return to Agra, Jahangir sent an army, under Mohabat Khan, against the Rana of Udaipur, with whom the war had been renewed; and another, under the Khan Khanan, to effect a settlement of the Deccan. Prince Parviz was afterwards made nominal commander of the latter force: he was too young to exercise any real authority.

The only event of importance in the following years was an insurrection at Patna by a man of the lowest order, who assumed the character of Khusru, and, seizing on the city in consequence of the supineness of the local officers, drew together so many followers, that he engaged the governor of the province in the field, and some time elapsed before he was driven back into Patna, made prisoner, and put to death.

In the end of the year 1610, affairs in the Deccan assumed a serious aspect. After the taking of Ahmednagar, the conduct of the government of the new king fell into the hands of an Abyssinian named Malik Amber. This minister founded a new capital on the site of the present Aurangabad; and maintained, for a long series of years, the apparently sinking fortunes of the Nizam Shahi government. His talents were not confined to war: he introduced a new revenue system into the Deccan, per-

haps in imitation of Todar Mal; and it has given his name a universal celebrity in the Deccan equal to that enjoyed in Hindostan by the other great financier.⁴ Malik Amber profited by some dissensions which fell out between the Khan Khanan and the other generals; and prosecuted his advantages with such success that he repeatedly defeated the Moghul troops, retook Ahmednagar, and compelled the Khan Khanan himself to retire to Burhanpur. In these circumstances, Jahangir recalled his general, and conferred the command on Khan Jahan.

It was in the sixth year of his reign that Jahangir contracted a marriage with the celebrated Nur Jahan, an event which influenced all the succeeding transactions of his life.

The grandfather of this lady was a native of Teheran, in Persia, and held a high civil office under the government of that country. His son, Mirza Ghiyas, was reduced to poverty, and determined to seek for a maintenance by emigrating, with his wife, and a family consisting of two sons and a daughter, to India. He was pursued by misfortune even in this attempt; and by the time the caravan with which he travelled reached Kandahar, he was reduced to circumstances of great distress. Immediately on his arrival in that city his wife was delivered of Nur Jahan; and into so abject a condition had they fallen, that the parents were unable to provide for the conveyance of their infant, or to maintain the mother so as to admit of her giving it support. The future empress was therefore exposed on the road by which the caravan was next morning to proceed. She was observed by a principal merchant of the party, who felt compassion for her situation, and was struck with her beauty; he took her up, and resolved to educate her as his own.

As a woman in a situation to act as a nurse was not easy to be found in a caravan, it is a matter of no surprise

4. *Grant Duff's History of the Marattas*, vol. i. p. 95.

that her own mother should have been the person employed in that capacity; and the merchant's attention being thus drawn to the distresses of the family, he relieved their immediate wants; and perceiving the father and his eldest son to be men much above their present condition, he employed them in matters connected with his business, and became much interested in their fate. By his means they were introduced to Akbar; and, being placed in some subordinate employments, they soon rose by their own abilities.

In the meantime Nur Jahan grew up, and began to excite admiration by her beauty and elegance. She often accompanied her mother, who had free access to the harem of Akbar, and there attracted the notice of Jahangir, then Prince Selim. His behaviour gave so much uneasiness to her mother, as to induce her to speak of it to the princess whom she was visiting. Through her, the case was laid before Akbar, who remonstrated with his son; and, at the same time, recommended that Nur Jahan should be married, and removed from the prince's sight. She was bestowed on Sher Afgan Khan, a young Persian lately come into the service, and to him Akbar gave a jagir in Bengal.⁵

But these means were not sufficient to efface the impression made on Jahangir; and, after he had been about a year on the throne, he took the opportunity of his foster-brother Kutb-ud-din's going as viceroy of Bengal to charge him to procure for him the possession of the object of his passion.

It was probably expected that all opposition from the husband would be prevented by influence and promises; but Sher Afgan had a higher sense of honour, and no sooner suspected the designs that were entertained than he resigned his command, and left off wearing arms, as a sign that he was no longer in the King's service.

5. [*He was appointed governor of Burdwan.—Ed.*]

The further progress of the affair does not appear: it must have been such as to alarm Sher Afgan; for the viceroy having taken occasion to visit the part of the province where he resided, and having sent to invite his attendance, he went to pay his visit with a dagger concealed in his dress. An interview begun in such a spirit might be expected to close in blood. Sher Afgan, insulted by the proposals, and enraged at the threats of the viceroy, took his revenge, with his dagger, and was himself immediately dispatched by the attendants.

The murder of the viceroy, which was ascribed to a treasonable conspiracy, gave a colour to all proceedings against the family of the assassin. Nur Jahan was seized, and sent as a prisoner to Delhi. Jahangir soon after offered her marriage, and applied all his address to soothe and conciliate her; but Nur Jahan was a high-spirited as well as an artful woman, and it is not improbable that she was sincere in her rejection of all overtures from one whom she looked on as the murderer of her husband. Her repugnance was so strongly displayed as to disgust Jahangir. He at length placed her among the attendants on his mother, and appeared to have entirely dismissed her from his thoughts.

His passion, however, was afterwards revived; and reflection having led his mistress to think more favourably of his offers, their marriage was celebrated with great pomp; and Nur Jahan was raised to honours such as had never before been enjoyed by the consort of any king in India.⁶ From this period her ascendancy knew no bounds: her father was made prime minister; her brother was placed in a higher station. The emperor took no step without consulting her; and, on every affair in which she took an interest, her will was law. Though her sway produced bad consequences in the end, it was beneficial on

6. Among other marks of sovereignty her name was put on the coin along with the emperor's. [See Marsden, p. 635.]

the whole. Her father was a wise and upright minister: and it must have been, in part at least, owing to her influence that so great an improvement took place in the conduct of Jahangir after the first few years of his reign. He was still capricious and tyrannical, but he was no longer guilty of such barbarous cruelties as before; and although he still carried his excess in wine to the lowest stage of inebriety, yet it was at night, and in his private apartments.⁷ In the occupations which kept him all day before the eyes of his subjects, he seems to have supported his character with sufficient dignity, and without any breaches of decorum. Nur Jahan's capacity was not less remarkable than her grace and beauty; it was exerted in matters proper to her sex, as well as in state affairs. The magnificence of the emperor's court was increased by her taste, and the expense was diminished by her good arrangement. She continued improvements in the furniture of apartments; introduced female dresses more becoming than any in use before her time; and it is a question in India whether it is to her or her mother that they owe to the invention of ottar of roses.⁸ One of the accomplishments by which she captivated Jahangir is said to have been her facility in composing extempore verses.

It was not long after the time of this marriage that the disturbances in Bengal were put an end to by the defeat and death of Osman. The satisfaction derived from this event was more than counterbalanced by the ill-success of the war in the Deccan. Jahangir had determined to make up for the languor of his former operations by a combined attack from all the neighbouring provinces.

7. [Marsden gives (p. 607) a "bacchanalian coin" dated A. H. 1023, representing the Sultan as raising a cup in his hand.—Ed.]

8. Great improvements must have taken place in later times; for Khafi Khan mentions that the same quantity of ottar (one tola) which he remembers selling in the beginning of Aurangzib's reign for eighty rupees, was to be had, when he wrote, for seven or eight.

Abdullah Khan, viceroy of Guzerat, was to invade Malik Amber's territory from that province at the same moment that the armies under Prince Parviz and Khan Jehan Lodi, reinforced by Raja Man Singh, were to advance from Khandesh and Berar. But this well-concerted plan entirely failed in the execution. Abdullah Khan advanced prematurely from Guzerat, and Malik Amber did not lose a moment in profiting by his mistake. His mode of war was much the same as that of the modern Maharattas. Owing to the neighbourhood of the European ports, his artillery was superior to that of the emperor, and afforded a rallying point on which he could always collect his army; but his active means of offence were his light cavalry. He intercepted the supplies and harassed the march of the Moghuls; he hovered round their army when halted; alarmed them with false attacks; and often made real incursions into different parts of the encampment, carrying off much booty and keeping up continual disorder and trepidation. Abdullah Khan was so completely worn out by this sort of warfare, that he soon determined to retire. The consequences of a retreat before such an enemy were easy to be foreseen; all his evils multiplied upon him from the day that it commenced; his rear guard was cut to pieces and his march had nearly become a flight before he found refuge in the hills and jungles of Baglana, whence he proceeded without molestation into Guzerat. The other armies had by this time taken the field; but seeing Malik Amber, on his return, flushed with success over their colleague, they thought it prudent to avoid a similar calamity, and concentrated at Burhanpur.

Jahangir's arms were attended with better fortune in his war with the Rana of Udaipur; and his success was the more welcome as the fruit of the abilities of his favourite son. Mohabat Khan, when first sent on that service, had gained a victory over Rana, but was unable to do anything decisive from the strength of the country into which he, as usual, retreated. The same fortune attended Abdul-

lah Khan, afterwards appointed to succeed Mohabat; but Prince Khurram (Shah Jahan),⁹ who was now sent with an army of 20,000 men, evinced so much spirit in his attack on the Rajput troops, and so much perseverance in bearing up against the strength of the country and the unhealthiness of the climate, that the Rana was at last induced to sue for peace; and his offer being readily accepted, he waited on Shah Jahan in person, made offerings in token of submission, and sent his son to accompany the prince to Delhi. Shah Jahan, on this occasion, did not forget the policy of Akbar. The moment the Rana's homage was paid, he raised him in his arms, seated him by his side, and treated him with every form of respect and attention. All the country conquered from him since the invasion of Akbar was restored; and his son, after an honourable reception from Jahangir, was raised to a high rank among the military chiefs of the empire.

The merit of this campaign belonged exclusively to Shah Jahan; for Aziz, who had been sent to assist him, had behaved to him with so much arrogance that Jahangir was soon obliged to remove him, and commit him for a time to confinement.

This exploit raised Shah Jahan's credit to the highest pitch; and as he had lately married the niece of Nur Jahan, he was supported by her powerful influence, and was generally looked on as the chosen successor to the empire.

During these events Raja Man Singh died in the Deccan. A rebellion of the Rosheniyas, which broke out in 1611, and in which the city of Kabul had been exposed to danger, was now terminated by the death of Ahdad, the grandson and spiritual successor of Bayazid.

9. *The name of this prince was Khurram, and he bore no other at the commencement of his father's reign; but as he received the title of Shah Jehan long before his own accession, it will prevent confusion to give him that name from the first.*

Abdullah Khan, viceroy of Guzerat, having incurred the King's displeasure, by oppressions in the province, and by the indignity with which he treated the royal news-writer, was ordered to be siezed and sent to the capital. He anticipated the order by setting off on foot, with his troops and attendants following at a great distance. He came to court barefooted and in chains, and threw himself at the king's feet; but was pardoned, and not long after restored to favour at the intercession of Shah Jahan.

It was not long after the return of Shah Jahan that Sir T. Roe arrived at the court, as ambassador from King James I.¹⁰ His accounts enable us to judge of the state of India under Jahangir.

The seaports and the customs were full of gross abuses, the governor seizing on goods at arbitrary prices. Even Roe, though otherwise treated with hospitality and respect, had his baggage searched and some articles taken by the governor.¹¹ His journey from Surat, by Burhanpur and Chitor, to Ajmir, lay through the Deccan, where war was raging, and the Rana's country, where it had just ceased; yet he met with no obstruction or alarm, except from mountaineers, who then, as now, rendered the roads unsafe in times of troubles.

The Deccan bore strong marks of devastation and neglect. Burhanpur, which had before, as it has since, been a fine city, contained only four or five good houses amidst a collection of mud huts; and the court of Parviz,

10. He arrived at Ajmir on December, 23, 1615, accompanied the king to Mandu and Gazerat, and left him in the end of 1618.

11. It must, however, be observed, that this governor, Zulfikar Khan, was very inimical to the English, and had lately concluded an agreement with the Portuguese, by which he engaged to exclude English vessels from his ports. The agreement was not ratified by the emperor; and Zulfikar was constrained, by his duty to his own government, to maintain outward appearance towards a foreign ambassador. (Orme, vol. iii. p. 361, etc.)

held in that town, had no pretensions to splendour. In other places he was struck with the decay and desertion of some towns, contrasted with the prosperity of others. The former were, in some instances at least, deserted capitals;¹² and their decline affords no argument against the general prosperity. The administration of the country had rapidly declined since Akbar's time. The governments were farmed, and the governors exacters and tyrannical.

Though a judicious and sober writer, Roe is profuse in his praise of the magnificence of the court; and he speaks in high terms of the courtesy of the nobility, and of the order and elegance of the entertainments they gave to him. His reception, indeed, was in all respects most hospitable, though the very moderate scale of his presents and retinue was not likely to conciliate a welcome where state was so generally maintained. He was excused from all humiliating ceremonials, was allowed to take the highest place in the court on public occasions, and was continually admitted into familiar intercourse with the emperor himself.

The scenes he witnessed at his private interviews from a curious contrast to the grandeur with which the Moghul was surrounded. He sat on a low throne all covered with diamonds, pearls, and rubies; and had a great display of gold plate, vases, and goblets, set with jewels. The party was free from all restraint, scarcely one of them remaining sober except Sir Thomas and a few other grave personages, who were cautious in their indulgence. Jahangir himself never left off till he dropped asleep, when the lights were extinguished and the company with-

12. Such were Mandu and Todah, of both of which he speaks in the highest terms of admiration. Mandu, the former capital of Malwa, is still generally known; but Todah (the capital of a Rajput prince in the province of Ajmir) enjoys no such celebrity.

drew. On these occasions he was overflowing with kindness, which increased with the effects of the wine: and once, after talking with great liberality of all religions, "he fell to weeping, and to various passions, which kept them to midnight."

But he did not retain these sociable feelings in the morning. On one occasion, when a courtier indiscreetly alluded in public to a debauch of the night before, Jahangir affected surprise, inquired what other persons had shared in this breach of the law, and ordered those named to be so severely bastinadoed that one of them died. He always observed great strictness in public, and never admitted a person into his presence who, from his breath or otherwise, gave any signs of having been drinking wine. His reserve, however, was of little use: like great men at present, he was surrounded by news-writers; and his most secret proceedings, and even the most minute actions of his life were known to every man in the capital within a few hours after they took place.

Notwithstanding the case above mentioned, and some other instances of inhumanity, Roe seems to consider Jehangir as neither wanting in good feelings nor good sense; although his claim to the latter quality is somewhat impaired by some weaknesses which Sir Thomas himself relates. In one case he seized on a convoy coming to the ambassador from Surat, and consisting of presents intended for himself and his court, together with the property of some merchants who took advantage of the escort; he rummaged the packages himself with childish curiosity; and had recourse to the meanest apologies to appease and cajole Roe, who was much provoked at this disregard of common honesty.

Though Roe speaks highly in some respects of particular great men, he represents the class as unprincipled, and all open to corruption. The treaty he had to negotiate hung on for upwards of two years, until he bribed Asaf

Khan with a valuable pearl; after which all went on well and smoothly. Both Roe and other contemporary travellers represent the military spirit as already much declined, and speak of the Rajputs and Pathans as the only brave soldiers to be found.¹³

The manual arts were in a high state, and were not confined to those peculiar to the country. One of Sir T. Roe's presents was a coach, and within a very short period several others were constructed, very superior in materials, and fully equal in workmanship. Sir Thomas also gave a picture to the Moghul, and was soon after presented with several copies, among which he had great difficulty in distinguishing the original.¹⁴ There was a great influx of Europeans, and considerable encouragement to their religion. Jahangir had figures of Christ and the Virgin at the head of his rosary; and two of his nephews embraced Christianity, with his full approbation.¹⁵

The language of the court was Persian, but all classes spoke Hindustani; and Hawkins, who only knew Turkish, found the emperor himself and the Khan Khanan well versed in that tongue.

No subject seems to have excited more interest, both in the ambassador and the court, than the fate of Prince Khusru. All his bad qualities were forgotten in his misfortunes; he was supposed to be endowed with every virtue; the greatest joy prevailed when any sign appeared of his restoration to favour, and corresponding indignation when he fell into the power of his enemies. Even the king was supposed to be attached to him, though wrought on by the influence of Shah Jahan and the arts of Asaf

13. *Roe. Terri. Hawkins.*

14. *Among the articles he recommends for presents are historical paintings, nightpieces, and landscapes: "but good, for they understand them as well as we."*

15. *Roe. Hawkins. Terry. Coryat.*

Khan and Nur Jahan.¹⁶ Khusru's exclusion was not the more popular for its being in favour of Shah Jahan, who, according to Sir T. Roe, was "flattered by some, envied by others, loved by none." Roe himself represents him as a bigot and a tyrant; but as his conduct shows nothing but ability and correctness, it is probable that he owed his unpopularity to his cold and haughty manners; the ambassador himself remarking that he never saw so settled a countenance, or any man keep so constant a gravity—never smiling, nor by his looks showing any respect of distinction of persons, but entire pride and contempt for all. Yet the prince could not at that time have been older than twenty-five.

Shah Jahan might have expected to find a formidable rival in Parviz, his elder brother, but that prince, though sometimes an object of jealousy to him, could offer no really formidable opposition to the superior abilities of Shah Jahan supported by the influence of the empress.

A final blow was given to any hopes that Parviz may have entertained by the elevation of his brother to the title of king.¹⁷ on his undertaking a great expedition against the Deccan. He was invested with ample powers on this occasion; and Jahangir himself moved to Mandu, to be at hand to support him in case of need.

Row accompanied the emperor on his march; and his account of the movement of the army forms a striking contrast to the good order and discipline he had hitherto admired. The court and camp, while halted, were as regular as ever, but the demand for carriage cattle created

16. Sir T. Roe once met Khusru, while moving in loose custody, along with the army. He stopped under the shade of a tree during the heat, and sent for Sir Thomas, who was near. His person was comely, his countenance cheerful, and his beard was grown down to his girdle. He knew nothing of what was passing, and had not heard either of the English or of their ambassador.

17. From this time some writers call him Shah Khurram, and others Shah Jehan.

a general scramble and confusion. The Persian ambassador and Row were left for some days at Ajmir, from the want of conveyance for their baggage; and the tents of the soldiers and followers were set fire to, to compel them to proceed, though ill provided. When actually in motion, the same want of arrangement was felt: sometimes there was a deficiency of water; and sometimes, in long and difficult marches through woods and mountains, the road was scattered with coaches, carts, and camels, unable to proceed to the stage.¹⁸

The state of affairs in the Deccan was very favourable to Shah Jahan. The ascendancy of a private person, like Malik Amber, led to jealousy among his confederates, and even his own officers. In consequence of these dissensions, he had suffered a defeat, which produced still further discouragement among the allies; so that when Shah Jahan entered the Deccan, he found little difficulty in detaching the king of Bijapur from the confederacy; and Amber, seeing himself entirely deserted was likewise compelled to make submission on the part of his nominal sovereign, Nizam Shah and to restore the fort of Ahmednagar and all the other territory which he had reconquered from the Moghuls.

After this glorious termination of the war, Shah Jahan returned to Mandu, and joined his father, within a twelve-month of the time when they had marched from Ajmer. Jahangir took this occasion to visit the province of Guzerat; he remained there for near a year, and added the vice-royalty of that province to the governments previously held by Shah Jahan.

He quitted Guzerat in September 1618; and the next two years are marked by no events, except an insurrection in the Punjab; the capture of the fort of Kangra or

18. *"In following the Moghul's court," says Roe. "I encountered all the inconveniences that men are subject to under an ill government and an intemperate climate."*

Nagarkot, under the mountains; and a journey of the emperor to Kashmir.

While in that valley, he received intelligence of a renewal of the war in the Deccan; it seems to have been begun without provocation, by Malik Amber, who probably was tempted by some negligence on the other side; for he had little difficulty in taking possession of the open country, and driving the Moghul commanders into Burhanpur, from whence they sent most earnest entreaties for help from Jahangir. Shah Jahan was again ordered to march with a powerful army, and great treasures were collected to supply him after he reached the frontier. From some rising distrust in his mind, he refused to march, unless his brother, Prince Khusru, were made over to his custody, and allowed to go with him to the Deccan. Being gratified in this respect, he entered on the service with his usual ability. Before he reached Malwa, a detachment of Malik Amber's had crossed the Narbada, and burned the suburbs of Mandu; but they were driven back as the prince advanced, and he, in turn, crossed the Narbada, and began offensive operations. Malik Amber had recourse to his usual mode of war—cut off supplies and detachments, hung upon the line of march, and attempted, by long and rapid marches, to surprise the camp. He found Shah Jahan always on his guard, was at last compelled to risk the fate of the campaign in a general action and was defeated with considerable loss.

But although Shah Jahan had a clear superiority in the field, he still found a serious obstruction in the exhausted state of the country. It was therefore with great satisfaction that he received overtures from Amber, offering a further cession, and agreeing to pay a sum of money.

Not long after this success, Jahangir was seized with a violent attack of asthma, a complaint from which he suffered severely during the rest of his life. He was for some time in such imminent danger as to lead to expectations of an immediate vacancy of the throne.

Parviz hastened to court, but was sent back to his government with a reprimand; and though Shah Jahan had not time to take such a step before he heard of his father's recovery, yet the sudden death of Prince Khusru, which happened at this juncture, was so opportune, that it brought the strongest suspicions of violence against the rival to whose custody he had been entrusted. We ought not, however, too readily to believe that a life not sullied by any other crime could be stained by one of so deep a dye.

This event, which seemed to complete the security of Shah Jahan's succession, was, in reality, the cause of a series of dangers and disasters that nearly ended in his ruin. Up to this period, his own influence had been strengthened by the all-powerful support of Nur Jahan; but about the time of his departure for the Deccan, that princess had affianced her daughter by Sher Afgan to Prince Shahriyar, the youngest son of Jahangir,¹⁹ a connection of itself sufficient to undermine her exclusive attachment to the party of her more distant relative. But her views were further changed by a consideration of the impossibility of her gaining an ascendancy, such as she now possessed, over an active and intelligent prince like Shaha Jahan. During her father's lifetime she had been kept within bounds of moderation by his prudent counsels: after his death, which happened about this time, she exercised her dominion over the emperor without the least control; her brother, Asaf Khan (to whose daughter Shah Jahan was married) being a mere instrument of her will. Unwilling to relinquish such unlimited power, she determined by all means to oppose the succession of Shah Jahan; and, warned by the death of Khusru, and the danger of Jahangir, she saw that she had not a moment to lose in cutting off the resources which might at any time enable the prince to overcome her opposition.

19. *Khafi Khan.*

An opportunity was not long wanting of pursuing this design. Kandahar having been taken by the Persians, it was pointed out as an enterprise worthy of the conqueror of the Deccan to recover that ancient possession. Shah Jahan at first gave in to the project, and advanced as far as Mandu on his way to the north; but perceiving, before long, that the object was to remove him from the country where his influence was established, and engage him in a remote and difficult command, he put off his further march, on pretext of the season and the state of his troops, and began to stipulate for some securities to be given to him before he should venture to move out of India.

These demands were represented to Jahangir as arising from a project of independence; and Shah Jahan was directed, in reply, to send the greater part of his army to the capital, in order that it might accompany Shahriyar, to whom the recovery of Kandahar was to be committed. Orders were also sent direct to the principal officers to leave Shah Jahan's camp and repair to that of Shahriyar. This drew a remonstrance from Shah Jahan, who now desired to be allowed to wait on his father, while the other as **peremptorily ordered him to return to the Deccan.** The jagirs which Shah Jahan held in Hindustan were transferred to Shahriyar during these discussions; and Shah Jahan, who had not been consulted in the arrangement, was desired to select an equivalent in the Deccan and Guzerat. As things drew towards a crisis, Nur Jahan, distrusting both the military talents of her brother and his zeal in her present cause, cast her eyes on Mohabat Khan, the most rising general of the time, but hitherto the particular enemy of Asaf Khan. He was accordingly summoned to court from his government of Kabul, and was treated with every mark of favour and confidence.

Jahangir, who had been again in Kashmir, returned on commencement of these discussions, and fixed his court at Lahore, to be at hand in case his presence should be

required. In the meantime messages passed between Shah Jahan and the emperor, but with so little effect in producing a reconciliation, that Jahangir put several persons to death on suspicion of a plot with his son; and Shah Jahan, finding that his fate was sealed, marched from Mandu with his army toward Agra. Jahangir, on this, marched from Lahore, and passing through the capital, arrived within twenty miles of the rebel army, lying at Belochpur, forty miles south of Delhi. Shah Jahan retired into the neighbouring hills of Mewat, and disposed his troops so as to shut the passes against a force which the emperor detached in quest of him. A partial and indecisive action took place, and is said to have been followed by negotiations. The result was, that Shah Jahan determined to retire and set out on his march for Mandu.

It does not appear what induced him to adopt this step: it was attended with all the consequences usual with attempts to recede in civil wars. Jahangir advanced in person to Ajmir, and sent on a strong force, under Prince Parviz and Mohabat Khan, to follow up the retiring rebels. Rustam Khan, whom Shah Jahan had left to defend the hills on the Chambal, deserted to the enemy; the province of Guzerat expelled his governor, and he was himself compelled, by the advance of the imperial army, to cross the Narbada, and retire to Burhanpur. Nor was he long permitted to remain there in tranquillity; for Mohabat Khan, having blinded him by some delusive negotiations, crossed the Narbada, and was joined by the Khan Khanan, who till this time had been attached to Shah Jahan. The rains were at their height when Shah Jahan commenced his retreat into Telingana, and a great part of his forces had deserted him before he directed his course to Masulipatam, with the intention of making his way to Bengal. He accomplished this long and arduous march by the early part of the succeeding year, and met with no opposi-

tion in Bengal, until he reached Rajmahal, where the governor of the province engaged him, and was defeated in a pitched battle. By this victory, Shah Jahan obtained possession of Bengal, and was enabled to seize on Bihar, and to send on a detachment under Bhim Sing, the brother of the Rana of Udaipur, to endeavour to secure the fort of Allahabad.

In the meantime Prince Parviz and Mohabat Khan, after chasing Shah Jahan from the Deccan, had cantoned for the rainy season at Burhanpur. On hearing of his arrival and rapid progress in Bengal, they put themselves in motion in the direction of Allahabad. Shah Jahan crossed the Ganges to meet them; but the people of the country who were not inclined to enter on opposition to the emperor refused to bring in supplies to his camp, or to assist in keeping up his communications by means of the boats on the Ganges. The discouragement and privations which were the consequence of this state of things, led to the desertion of the new levies which Shah Jahan had raised in Bengal; and when, at last, he came to an action with his opponents, he was easily overpowered, his army dispersed, and himself constrained once more to seek for refuge in the Deccan. Affairs in that quarter were favourable to his views. During his first flight to the Deccan the king of Bijapur and Malik Amber had both remained steady to their engagement with Jahangir; and the king of Golconda had shown no disposition to assist him during his retreat through Telingana. Since that time the Moghuls had taken part on the side of the king of Bijapur, in a dispute between him and Malik Amber; and the latter chief retaliated by invading the Moghul dominions, and carrying his ravages to the neighbourhood of Burhanpur. He was therefore prepared to receive Shah Jahan with open arms, and wrote to press him to undertake the siege of Burhanpur. Shah Jahan complied, and commenced his operations. The place made an obstinate defence; and, in the end, the

return of Parviz and Mohabat to the Narbada obliged him to raise the siege and attend to his own safety. His adherents now deserted him in greater numbers than before; and, being dispirited by ill-health as well as adverse fortune, he wrote to beg his father's forgiveness, and to express his readiness to submit to his commands. Jahangir directed him to give up the forts of Rohtas in Bihar, and Asirghar in the Deccan, both of which were still in his possession, and to send two of his sons, Dara Shukoh and Aurangzeb, to court, as hostages for his good behaviour. These demands were complied with; but we are prevented from judging the treatment designed for Shah Jahan by an event which, for a time, threw the whole empire into confusion.

After the first retreat of Shah Jahan to the Deccan, Jahangir returned from Ajmir to Delhi; and, believing all serious danger to his government to be at an end, he went on his usual expedition to Kashmir, and repeated it in the following year. On the third year he was induced, by a new revolt of the Rosheniyas, to change his destination for Kabul; and although he soon heard of the suppression of the rebellion, and received the head of Ahmed, the son of Ahdad, who was the leader of it, he made no change in his determination.

But he was not destined to accomplish this journey in tranquillity; for no sooner was Shah Jahan reduced to submission than the domineering spirit of Nur Jahan proceeded to raise up new enemies. Mohabat Khan was the son of Ghor Beg, a native of Kabul.²⁰ He had attained the rank of a commander of 500 under Akbar, and was raised to the highest dignities and employments by Jahangir. He had long enjoyed a high place in the opinion of the people,²¹ and might now be considered as

20. *Memoirs of Jehangir*, p. 30.

21. Sir T. Roe, in A.D. 1616, says of him, that he is a noble and generous man, will-beloved by all men, and the king's only favourite, but cares not for the prince (Shah Jahan).

the most eminent of all the emperor's subjects. This circumstance alone might have been sufficient to excite the jealousy of Nur Jahan. It is probable, however, that she also distrusted Mohabat for his old enmity to her brother, and his recent connexion with Parviz.

Whatever might be the motive, he was now summoned to court, to answer charges of oppression and embezzlement during the time of his occupation of Bengal. He at first made excuses for not attending and was supported by Parviz; but, finding that his appearance was insisted on, he set out on his journey, accompanied by a body of 5,000 Rajputs, whom he had contrived to attach to his service.

Before his arrival, he betrothed his daughter to a young nobleman, named Berkhordar, without first asking the emperor's leave, as was usual with persons of his high rank. Jahangir was enraged at this apparent defiance: he sent for Berkhordar, and, in one of those fits of brutality which still broke out, he ordered him to be stripped naked and beaten with thorns in his own presence; and then seized on the dowry he had received from Mohabat, and sequestered all his other property.

When Mohabat himself approached the camp, he was informed that he would not be admitted to the emperor's presence; and, perceiving that his ruin was predetermined, he resolved not to wait till he should be separated from his troops, but to strike a blow, the very audacity of which should go far to insure its success.

Jahangir was at this time encamped on the Hydaspes; and was preparing to cross it, by a bridge of boats, on his way to Kabul. He sent the army across the river in the first instance, intending to follow at his leisure, when the crowd and confusion should be over. The whole of the troops had passed, and the emperor remained with his personal guards and attendants, when Mohabat, getting his men under arms a little before daybreak, sent a detachment of 2,000 men to seize the bridge, and moved

himself, with all speed, to the spot where the emperor was encamped. The place was quickly surrounded by his troops; while he himself, at the head of a chosen body of 200 men, pushed straight for the emperor's tent. The attendants were overthrown and dispersed before they were aware of the nature of the attack; and Jahangir, who was not quite recovered from the effects of his last night's debauch, was awakened by the rush of armed men around his bed: he started up, seized his sword, and, after staring wildly round, he perceived what had befallen him, and exclaimed, "Ah! Mohabat Khan! traitor! what is this?" Mohabat Khan replied by prostrating himself on the ground, and lamenting that the persecution of his enemies had forced him to have recourse to violence to obtain access to his master. Jahangir at first could scarcely restrain his indignation; but observing, amidst all Mohabat's humility that he was not disposed to be trifled with, he gradually accommodated himself to his circumstances, and endeavoured to conciliate his captor. Mohabat now suggested to him that, as it was near his usual time of mounting it was desirable that he should show himself in public to remove alarm, and check the misrepresentations of the ill-disposed. Jahangir assented, and endeavoured to withdraw, on pretence of dressing, to his female apartments, where he hoped to have an opportunity of consulting with Nur Jahan: being prevented from executing his design, he prepared himself where he was, and at first mounted a horse of his own in the midst of the Rajputs, who received him with respectful obeisances; but Mohabat, reflecting that he would be in safer custody, as well as more conspicuous, on an elephant whose driver could be depended on, urged him to adopt that mode of conveyance, and placed him on one of those animals with two-armed Rajputs by his side. At this moment, the chief elephant-driver, attempting to force his way through the Rajputs, and to seat the emperor on an elephant of his own, was despatched on a sign from Mohabat. One of

Jahangir's personal attendants who reached the elephant, not without a wound, was allowed to mount with his master; and the same permission was given to the servant who was entrusted with the bottle and goblet, so essential to Jahangir's existence. These examples of the consequence of resistance had their full effect on the emperor and he proceeded very tractably to the tents of Mohabat Khan.

Meanwhile Nur Jahan, though dismayed at this unexpected calamity did not lose her presence of mind. When she found all access cut off to the emperor, she immediately put on a disguise, and set out for the bridge in a litter of the most ordinary description. As the guards were ordered to let every one pass, but permit no one to return, she crossed the river without obstruction, and was soon safe in the midst of the royal camp. She immediately sent for her brother and the principal chiefs, and bitterly reproached them with their cowardice and neglect, in allowing their sovereign to be made a prisoner before their eyes. She did not confine herself to invectives, but made immediate preparations to rescue her husband by force; and although Jahangir probably in real apprehension of what might happen to himself in the confusion, sent a messenger with his signet to entreat that no attack might be made, she treated the message as a trick of Mohabat's, and only suspended her proceedings until she could ascertain the real position of the enemy's camp, and the part of it inhabited by the emperor. During the night, a nobleman named Fedai Khan made an attempt to carry off Jahangir, by swimming the river at the head of a small body of horse; his approach was discovered and it was with difficulty he effected his escape, after losing several of his companions killed and drowned in the river.

Next morning the whole army moved down to the attack. It was headed by Nur Jahan herself, who appeared on the howdah of a high elephant with a bow and two quivers of arrows. The bridge had been burnt by the

Rajputs, and the army began to cross by a ford which they had discovered lower down the river. It was a narrow shoal between deep water, and full of dangerous pools, so that the passage was not effected without the utmost disorder: many were obliged to swim, and all landed with their powder wetted, weighed down with their drenched clothes and armour and obliged to engage hand-do-hand before they could make good their footing on the beach. Nur Jahan was among the foremost, on her elephant, with her brother and some of the principal chiefs around her: she with difficulty effected a landing, but found it impossible to make any impression on the enemy. The Rajputs had the advantage of the ground: they poured down showers of balls, arrows and rockets on the troops in the ford; and, rushing down on those who were landing, drove them back into the water, sword in hand.

A scene of universal tumult and confusion ensued: the ford was choked with horses and elephants; some fell, and were trampled under foot; others sank in the pools, and were unable to regain the shoal; and numbers plunged into the river, and ran the chance of making good their passage, or being swept away by the stream. The most furious assault was directed on Nur Jahan: her elephant was surround by a crowd of Rajputs; her guards were overpowered and cut down at its feet; balls and arrows fell thick round her howdah and one of the latter wounded the infant daughter of Shehriyar, who was seated in her lap. At length her driver was killed; and her elephant having received a cut on the proboscis, dashed into the river, and soon sank in deep water, and was carried down by the stream: after several plunges he swam out and reached the shore, when Nur Jahan was surrounded by her women, who came shrieking and lamenting, and found her howdah stained with blood, and herself busy in extracting the arrow, and binding up the wounds of the infant. Fedai Khan had made another attempt during the confusion of the battle, to enter the enemy's camp at an

unsuspected point, and had penetrated so far that his balls and arrows fell within the tent where Jahangir was seated; but the general repulse forced him also to retire. He effected his retreat, wounded and with the loss of many of his men; and immediately retired to the neighbouring fort of Rohtas, of which he was the governor.

Nur Jahan now saw that there was no hope of rescuing her husband by force; and she determined to join him in his captivity, and trust to fortune and her own arts for effecting his deliverance.

Mohabat Khan, after his success at the Hydaspes, advanced to Attock, where Asaf Ali had retired. His authority was now so well established that it was recognized by most of the army; and Asaf Khan, and such leaders as attempted to hold out, were obliged in the end to give themselves up as prisoners. But the security and even the extent of Mohabat's power was far from being so great as it appeared. His haughty and violent behaviour to those who had been opposed to him took deep root in their breasts; the ascendancy of the Rajputs was offensive to the other troops; and, as the provinces were still faithful to the emperor, and two of his sons at large, Mohabat was obliged to use great magnanimity in his treatment of his prisoner, and to effect his objects by persuasion rather than by force or fear. Jahangir, tutored by Nur Jahan, took full advantage of the circumstances in which he was placed; he affected to enter into Mohabat's views with his usual facility; expressed himself pleased to be delivered from the thralldom in which he had been kept by Asaf Khan; and even carried his duplicity so far as to warn Mohabat that he must not think Nur Jahan was so well disposed to him as he was himself and to put him on his guard against little plots that were occasionally formed for thwarting his measures. Mohabat was completely blinded by these artifices, and, thinking himself sure of the emperor, he gave less heed to the designs of others.

ed by ill-health. From this time his fortunes began to brighten; he heard of the death of Parviz at Burhanpur, and learned also that Mohabat, instead of pursuing him, was now himself pursued by an army of the emperor, with whom he had again come to a rupture.

Encouraged by these circumstances, he set off, through Guzerat for the Deccan, where he was soon joined by Mohabat with such part of his force as still remained.²²

Jahangir, soon after his deliverance, marched back from Kabul to Lahore. Some time was spent in restoring every branch of the Government to its old footing; and when all had been satisfactorily arranged, the emperor set off on his annual visit to Kashmir.

Some time after his arrival in that valley, Shahriyar was seized with so violent an illness that he was obliged to leave Kashmir for the warmer climate of Lahore. Not long after his departure, Jahangir was himself taken ill with a severe return of his asthma, and it soon became evident that his life was in great danger. An attempt was made to remove him to Lahore; his complaint was increased by the motion and passage of the mountains, and before he had got over a third of his journey he had a severe attack, and died soon after reaching his tent, in the sixtieth year of his age.

Several of the great men of the time of Akber died shortly before Jahangir: Aziz died before the usurpation of Mohabat, Malik Amber during its continuance, and Mirza Khan (the Khan Khanan) shortly after it was suppressed.

Among the occurrences of Jahangir's reign may be mentioned an edict against the use of tobacco, which was

22. Gladwin's *Jehangir*. Khafi Khan makes an intermediate reconciliation between Mohabat and Jehangir, and another visit of Mohabat to court, followed by a fresh revolt; but these rapid changes appear inexplicable; and it is not easy to believe that if Mohabat had been in Nur Jehan's hands, having no longer her brother for a hostage, he would again have been allowed to retire in safety.

then a novelty. It would be curious as marking the epoch of the introduction of a practice now universal in Asia, if the name of *tambacu*, by which it is known in most eastern countries, were not of itself sufficient to show its American origin.²³

23. Where no other authority is quoted for facts in this reign, they are taken from Khafi Khan, from Gladwin's *Reign of Jehangir*, or from the autobiographical *Memoirs of the emperor*. Khafi Khan's history is compiled from various accounts, written and oral. Mr. Gladwin's is evidently all drawn from written histories, but he only quotes the *Maasiri Jehangiri*, and the *Memoirs of the emperor*, of which last he possessed a much more complete copy than that translated by Major Price. The *Memoirs* themselves contain a great deal of information regarding particular periods and the characters of individuals; and though written in a rambling and inaccurate manner, are not without signs of talent. A large portion of them is composed of stories of magical performances; some, though greatly exaggerated, are obviously tricks of ventriloquism and legerdemain, but all regarded by the emperor as in some degree the result of supernatural power. Those fables would lead to a lower estimate of his intelligence, if we did not remember the demonology of his contemporary in England. [Mr. Morley, in his *Catalogue*, shows that there are two editions of this autobiography. The one, translated by Major Price, gives an imperfect and confused account of only the first two years of the Sultan's reign; the other contains the autobiography of eighteen years, and is completed by an editor, Muhammad Hadi. Mr. Morley says: "The autobiography of Jehangir is undoubtedly one of the most curious and interesting works in the whole range of the Muhammadan literature of India, presenting, as it does, a complete picture of the private life of one of the most powerful and despotic monarchs of the world, of his own views, moral and political, of the manners of his court, and of the chief events of his reign."—Ed.]

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